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BY

DR. YVAN.

PRICE EIGHTEENPENCE.

LONDON:

BY VIZETELLY, GOUCH SQUARE.

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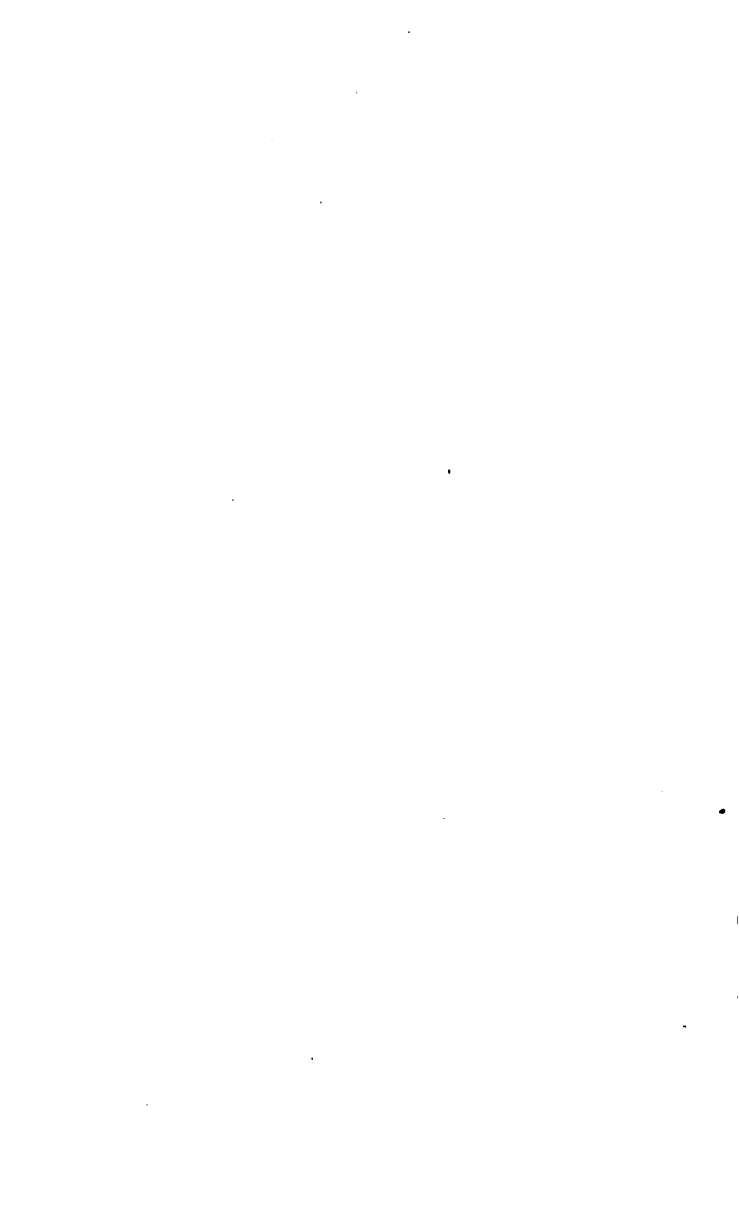
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INSIDE CANTON.

BY

DR. YVAN.

LONDON:

HENRY VIZETELLY, GOUGH SQUARE.

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K.P.C 1866

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H. Platt Lund

NOTE.

As the mode of spelling Chinese words is still undecided among Europeans, each writer on China having a peculiar method of his own, we have thought it best, in the present work, to adhere, with some few exceptions, to the orthography of the French author.

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INSIDE CANTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAI-TING—CHINESE GAMBLING—QUAIL FIGHTS AND
CRICKET-MATCHES—THE TCHOU-KIANG.

THE discussion of the articles of the treaty between France and the Celestial Empire rendered frequent communications necessary between the French ambassador and the viceroy of the two Kuangs. During these repeated interviews, the two diplomatists contracted a genuine friendship. The agreeable manners and the distinguished attainments of the French representative charmed the Imperial commissioner, and the latter behaved with so much frankness and good-nature, that he gained the esteem and affection of M. de Lagrené. Ki-in, with characteristic nobility, gave no special marks of his consideration and attachment for the emissary of the French Government, until the discussion of diplomatic affairs had been brought to an end. Then, in words full of Chinese atticism, he begged our plenipo-

tentiary to visit the capital of his kingdom, in order to continue, as he said, an acquaintance which had become so agreeable to him. M. de Lagrené accepted this invitation. The Mandarin Pan-se-Chen placed at his disposition one of the houses, or rather one of the palaces, which he possesses at Canton. But the cordial politeness of the mandarins did not cease here; they also invited MM. Barnard d'Harcourt, Callery, and myself to accompany the French minister on his journey.

Chinese customs often expose Europeans, and above all European ladies, to surprises of a very embarrassing nature; for this reason, M. de Lagrené requested the interpreter and the physician of the embassy to precede him, in order to overlook the preparations that were to be made for his reception.

We took our passage on board a *faï-ting*, and started for Canton five days before M. de Lagrené. The *faï-tings*, which the English call "fast boats," and the Portuguese *lorchas*, are excellent vessels, of about fifty tons, well built, good sailers, and doing the same duty that is performed on our coasts by steamers. When we arrived on board, Callery led me to the mainmast.

"Can you read?" he said.

"Why, yes," I replied.

Then, pointing maliciously to an inscription in Chinese, he said, "Well, then, read that."

"The joke is not bad," I said, with a laugh; "but read it yourself, you mongrel Chinaman."

"I will read it, then—'Take care of your purses.' Do you understand?"

"Perfectly well. I like the style of the notice; it is plain, concise, and direct, and moreover it appears called for," I added, casting my eyes upon my travelling companions.

There were forty passengers on board the faïting. There were costumes of all kinds: coolies in blue chams and straw hats; sailors in brown chams, with pig-tails twisted round their heads; boys in white chams; students in long flowing robes, wearing on their heads caps like those worn by French abbés, and surmounted by tassels of gold. The commander of the lorcha, dressed like the sailors, came towards us, and told us that our boys had placed our baggage in the general room, where we should find ourselves very comfortable. Indeed, according to the Chinese custom, we had sent on board of this floating omnibus of the Celestial Empire a mattress, a bolster, a mat, and a mosquito curtain.

"But are there not two stern cabins?" inquired Callery.

"Decidedly," said the Chinese; "but they are occupied by two merchants from Nankin."

This positive answer rendered it useless for us to endeavour to obtain private rooms, and we en-

tered the general saloon. This apartment is at the rear of the vessel. It forms a long square, and is furnished with tables, seats without backs, and lanterns suspended from the ceiling. There are two doors, one at each end, and several steps above the lower deck. Over one of the entrances, that of the fore-deck, there is a long inscription, in which the wonderful qualities of the vessel are enumerated—its great quickness, its superior construction, the experience of the captain, and the skilfulness of the sailors. Our boys, like persons who knew their business, had taken possession of two corners, and, by way of avoiding all possible discussion, had arranged our mattresses as if we intended to lie down directly we arrived. We lauded their zeal, and after warning them not to lose sight of our luggage for a single instant, returned to the deck.

This took place towards the end of October, some days after our return from San-Cian, the celebrated island where St. Francis Xavier died three centuries before. The sky was so pure and transparent that it resembled a dome of crystal; the wind was fresh, as the sailors say, and the waves danced joyfully. A squadron of fishing vessels and faï-tings were preparing to depart at the same time; on the right, on the left, before us and behind us, the sound of the gong was heard; then there was a firing of cannons, and we set sail.

This is how we started: —Four Chinamen, armed with long poles, thrust them to the bottom of the water, and leaning on them with all their weight, caused the rounded belly of the vessel to glide through the liquid mud. When it was afloat, a sailor hung, fastened to the end of a stick, a long chaplet of grenades, the explosive materials of which were enclosed in cylinders of red paper, and then set light to the cartridge which terminated this inflammable chain, so that, as the fire spread from one end to the other, sudden detonations were heard, which sounded like platoon firing, executed by badly-drilled soldiers. During this time, a man at the foot of the mizenmast struck repeatedly on a gong; the dry sharp explosions and the vibrations of the metal harmonised very well; the saltpetre went off with a rumbling noise, like the roll of a drum, while the sonorous vibrations of the gong filled the entire atmosphere, like the waves which extend over the immensity of the ocean. This cabalistic ceremony terminated, we hoisted our sails. The *faï-tings* have no keel, and draw very little water; everything had been calculated to ensure these vessels the greatest possible speed; hence their name, which signifies “fast boat.” A high wave, an unexpected gust, cause the rounded hulls to capsize, but they right with extreme facility. A *faï-ting* resembles those joyous birds of the sea who disport themselves in the midst of the waves, like

colts in the high grass. The sails having been hoisted, the vessel seemed to be left to the care of Heaven. A single sailor remained at the rudder; the others went away to take or prepare their meals. Soon at the stern of the vessel columns of steam were seen to rise from the boiling saucepans, in which rice was being cooked, while the most hungry of the crew eat the grains which had already become swollen out by the moist heat, accompanied by dried fish. The passengers walked about, and smoked the detestable tobacco of the Celestial Empire, or they collected in groups, and devoted themselves with phrensy to the fatal passion of gambling. The Chinese, for the most part, are born with a taste either for gambling or gastronomy. They never lose a chance of having a feast. Marriages, births, and burials are all so many pretexts for a banquet. It is the same thing with gambling; a Chinaman plays with dice, with cards, and with his fingers, and, in his eyes, every subject is a subject for betting. Our companions, by way of dramatising the ordinary chances of play, intrusted the defence of their money to some unfortunate fowls, who, in order to satisfy the passions of their masters, engaged in a most desperate combat. In general, all the gallinacious race have warlike instincts, and the Chinese have profited by this martial inclination to teach quails how to kill one another. These birds are much smaller in China

than with us; their plumage is varied in the same manner; but the quail of the Celestial Empire appears more irascible, more petulant, than its European sister.

A circle of men crouched together in the unnatural position peculiar to the Chinese, formed the spectators to this combat. The birds were enclosed in baskets of bamboos, with openings at the top, through which it was just possible to pass one's hand, and they were only taken out of this prison to be placed on the field of battle. I assisted at the commencement of the action. The adversaries were removed from their respective cages; their feathers were smoothed, a few words of encouragement were addressed to them, and, with a sharp pinch on the lower part of the beak, they were placed opposite to each other. The birds looked at one another at first with an air of defiance; then, as if moved by the same impulse, they sprang forwards. This first shock decided the victory; one of the combatants seized with his beak of steel the skin which covered his adversary's head, and pulled it back over his eyes. The unfortunate bird who was thus blinded uttered a cry, and ran away. A new enemy was opposed to the conqueror. This one waited firmly for the attack, and when he saw his antagonist rushing towards him, struck out at him with his feet, and upset him. Then profiting by the surprise of his adversary, he took him by

the throat, tore a quantity of feathers from him, which he threw to the wind, and then resumed his place, waiting bravely for a second attack; but the recent conqueror, like a clever tactician, now prudently beat a retreat. As has been seen, a few passes sufficed to terminate the combat; however, on one occasion, two duellists of equal skill and valour prolonged the struggle for a long time. After each attack they separated to regain force, until, fatigued by their ineffectual efforts, they ceased to fight. In the hands of the avaricious Chinese, they resemble the plumed warriors whom rival ambitions cast upon the field of battle.

I withdrew from this barbarous spectacle, and went to the rear of the vessel to sit down near the moveable fire-places, where the sailors were cooking their meals. Whilst I was examining their culinary processes, I suddenly heard the peaceful voice of a cricket, which was chirping in the loudest manner. I experienced a childish pleasure in finding on this floating habitation the guest of our humble hearths, the sprite of the smoky cabin, who, in European climates, continues to sing when all else is silent, as if to remind us of the beautiful days that are past, and to make us think of the slumbering inhabitants of the air, who are soon to be awaked. I went up to Callery.

"The Chinese," I said, "are really a patriarchal people; even when travelling they surround them-

selves with everything that can remind them of family life—of the joys of their homesteads. Will you believe that these poor sailors have brought with them the lively singers of the domestic hearth—these dear little crickets, whose voice during the winter mingles with that of the spinning-wheel, who, during the summer, follow the reapers to the fields, in order to repeat to the sound of the sickle the songs they have sung by the fire-side?"

Callery maliciously allowed me to finish my sentence, and then, with a shout of laughter, said,

"You are a strange kind of traveller, my friend; before seeing with your eyes, you see with your imagination. Do you wish to know why the Chinese have brought crickets on board?"

"Certainly," I replied, somewhat annoyed.

"Well, then, simply in order to make them fight. These sylphs of the hearth are in their eyes knights in black armour, destined to perish in order to defend the sapeiks of their masters. The betting will soon open, and you will assist at a strange combat."

In the meanwhile, the cricket I had heard continued his joyful cry, his deep and powerful voice testifying to his robust organisation. Soon afterwards a new singer appeared on the stage. This one had a clear sonorous voice, and was in fact a tenor—a genuine tenor.

"This is a contest in the style of those be-

tween Virgil's shepherds," said Callery; "or, if you prefer it, it is a duet between Lablache and Mario."

"As for the duet," I replied, "in spite of my pacific instincts, I would rather assist at the duel you promised me."

My wishes were gratified that very moment. Two Chinese took down a couple of cages of bamboo, adorned inside with green leaves, two little palaces filled with silky herbs, and sat down before me. The two palaces contained Lablache and Mario, who were taken out and placed in a porcelain bowl. Lablache was just what I had fancied him from the harmonious testimony of his voice: his rounded paunch caused the segments of his cuirass to bulge out; his powerful forelegs were armed with hooked nails, and through his brown visor could be seen two arched tusks, which lifted up his lips. Mario, on the contrary, was slim and graceful; his black armour fitted tightly round his waist, and his tusks were completely concealed by his mask of steel.

The two insects endeavoured at first to escape, but the polished sides of the bowl formed an insuperable obstacle to their attempt. Accordingly, they took up their positions at the bottom of the bowl, where they would have probably remained at peace with one another, but for the intervention of Chinese perfidy. The two backers were each armed with a long straw, but in the hands of the wicked the most harmless weapon becomes for-

midable. Mario's master, with the most abominable intention, pushed the blade of grass insolently beneath the nose of his champion; the latter thinking the insult came from Lablache, who at this moment appeared to be beating time with his antennæ, sprang at his head, and struck to the ground the horn on which he laid the guilt. Indignant at this unmerited aggression, the insect that had lost its horn flew at its adversary, and lamed him with the first blow. Mario looked for an instant with stupor at his forefoot, deprived of the right tarsus, and listening only to the voice of passion, seized Lablache by the hair, and dragged him three times round the bowl. Alas! it was not Achilles with the body of Hector; for Hector, suddenly disengaging himself, fell with all his weight upon his adversary, crushed him in his embrace, and devoured a portion of his head. After glutting his wrath, the conqueror took up his position in the middle of the bowl, and waited for a new assailant; but no other knight had the audacity to present himself. Lablache returned in triumph to his palace, shaking proudly his solitary horn. All day long our *faï-ting* was the theatre of similar scenes.

The Chinese never remain idle; when they do not work, they eat, play, or smoke. Night surprised us half-way between Macao and Canton, at the mouth of the Tchou-kiang, which the Europeans call the Bogue. There we passed the night at anchor.

The next day with the rising tide we cleared the ports of the Tiger (Bocca Tigris, as the navigators say). This narrow pass obtains its name from an island which protects the entrance, and of which the double summit has some resemblance to a kneeling camel. From this moment, the banks of the Tchou-kiang became narrower and narrower, and we arrived before the village of Whampoa, where, a few days before, the French plenipotentiary and the viceroy of the two Kuangs had signed the treaty which was to bind France and China together for ten thousand years.

Whampoa is situated on the slope of a vast hill, and European ships have been accustomed to cast anchor at its foot. It is in some sort a succursal to the port of Canton, which the avaricious mandarins have ceded to the barbarians. One day this concession will be real, and I am convinced that England will command sooner or later at Whampoa, as she commands now at Hong-kong. The landscape we discovered in ascending the river is unparalleled in richness; as far as the eye can see there are nothing but rice plantations, bordered in the most remarkable way by *litchi* and banana trees, in the midst of which groups of trees stand out, casting their shade over pagodas, temples, hamlets, and villages without number. This luxuriousness of growth has nothing in common with the unregulated fertility of land left entirely to itself; here nature has submitted with

docility to the hand of labour ; the smallest shrub, the most unimportant tree, only exists because it satisfies the wants or contributes to the enjoyment the master who has given it a place in the sun.

In the midst of these immense carpets of verdure, solitary towers rise up at certain intervals, like trunks of giant trees struck by lightning, or stripped by the hand of winter. These octagonal monuments, with five, seven, and nine storeys, were constructed in ancient times, in order, it is said, to attract the essences of the earth, and by the concentration of its mysterious fluids to insure the fertility of these countries. Certainly the inhabitants had no need to have recourse to these cabalistic means ; they possess within themselves wonderful secrets for subjecting rebellious nature and fertilising barren fields : the love of labour and prosperity, the spirit of order and economy. The aspect of the river itself testifies to the laborious habits of this enterprising race ; on the bank women, naked to the haunches, are seeking in the mud of the Tchou-kiang for shells with which to make lime ; while fishermen, on fragile rafts, pursue the unintelligent inhabitants of the waters, and follow them in the labyrinths which they have formed of flint in the bed of the river.

The Tchou-kiang is the sole means of communication by which the commerce of Canton is carried on with the barbarians. It is by this channel,

which twice a day runs in a different direction, as if to assist Chinese activity, that the manufactures which the European ships bring every year to the Celestial Empire, and the precious products which they take back, are exchanged. This prodigious amount of commerce makes the Chinese river one of the most animated water-routs in the world, compared with which the great rivers of France are timid brooks, bearing in their sinuous course a few insignificant cargoes. Six hours before reaching Canton, native vessels of all kinds and sizes are going and coming, amongst which some schooners of light build are seen, and a few steamers, elegantly constructed, and bearing the free standards of England and the United States. Shortly after our departure from Whampoa the flotillas of junks, fai-tings, and tankas, became so numerous that our ship furled its sails of reed, and we only proceeded with the oars, striking from time to time against all kinds of floating machines. At last night came, and half-an-hour afterwards we stopped before an impassable barrier formed by a compact mass of boats. Our men ceased to row, and the anchor was thrown out, and Callery said to me,—

“ We are at Canton.”

I cast my eyes in every direction. I was anxious to penetrate the darkness which surrounded it, in order to get at least the outline of the celebrated

city ; but the mysterious veil was not lifted for me that night. I could see nothing except some spherical globes at the tops of the masts, whose opaque light reminded me of those great phosphorescent Medusas which, in tropical regions, are seen rolling in the midst of the azure waters of the ocean. My travelling companions told me that we were in one of the poorest suburbs of the floating city. The laborious inhabitants of these agitated abodes were already asleep : all was silent around us, except that confused murmur which proceeds at night from the bosom of great towns, and which reached us through the distance. Occasionally, too, the sound of various stringed instruments was heard in the midst of this general hum.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE ON THE RIVER—A BREAKFAST OF TAO-FOU—
CHINESE MILK—THE FLOATING TOWN—A CHINESE
MANDARIN'S HOUSE.

THE next day, when I awoke, on quitting the ordinary reception room of the *faï-ting*, I was suddenly lost in a forest of dry wood. All around me was an inextricable confusion of poles and masts. These dead trees, adorned like those which are planted throughout France on days of general rejoicing, had on them, instead of leaves, standards and flags of all colours, and they seemed to grow naturally on the sterile and changing soil. This sinuous plain was the magnificent realisation of a celebrated *canard*, which formerly took flight from New York and went round the world : it was the floating isle with its towns, its fields, its heights, and valleys. Callery, who was with me, enjoyed my stupefaction ; he was the more charmed at my amazement, as I am not easily astonished when travelling :

“ How shall we get out of here ? ” I asked him.

“ Be easy,” replied he ; “ I have sent an express to Pan-se-Chen to announce our arrival, and he will not fail to send a mandarin boat to us.”

“ Unless your messenger has wings, like the one from the ark, I do not see which way he can have escaped.”

"Keep yourself quiet," said Callery, by way of consolation ; "observe the populace which surrounds you—it is worth the trouble ; I promise to get you out of these floating steppes before long."

I followed his advice. All the amphibious inhabitants were like so many workmen and citizens in their houses : they clean their dwelling-places, put all in order at home, or they indolently smoke their short pipes. The Chinese boats, without exception, have a clean and pleasant appearance : they are the poetic huts of the ocean, sheltering under their moving roof people as economical and laborious as those of Flanders. These houses are dressed every morning with unparalleled art and care ; they are washed, and to embellish them cosmetics are used, which bring into relief the slightest veins of the most common wood. The liquids made use of are varnishes which flow naturally from different kinds of plants, or else from siccatine oils, which are prepared in China with peroxyde of manganese.

In the next house to ours, one family particularly attracted my attention ; it consisted of four persons, the mother about thirty-five years of age, a young girl fourteen, and two little boys between five and six years old. All of them were seated on the prow,—shaped like a poop,—which is used as a seat in these vessels, and were finishing their morning meal. The mother's countenance was mild and phlegmatic : her

kind, fat face smiled on the laughing little children, who, with clean and well-shaved heads, held their pittance in their hands ; the young girl—dressed like a tanka girl, her pig-tail, fastened behind the occiput, falling in a plait down her back—looked at me with a kind and merry expression. Suddenly, the young tanka girl said a few words to me, which I did not understand, and offered me her breakfast: it was rice, seasoned with tao-fou, in a blue porcelain bowl. I took the bowl in my left hand, and the little sticks which are used in China to eat with, in the right. The grains of rice, well boiled and quite separated from one another, were polished and semi-transparent : they were like pearls just drawn from the depths of the ocean. The tao-fou, white like thick cream, and fried in the oil of the sesamum, partly covered the nourishing grain ; and over this mess was spread a brown liquid, which formed designs like those we admire on the buildings of raised pastry constructed by Swiss architects, vulgarly called pastry-cooks. This dish was very nice. I thought that among the Europeans who go to China, there are very few who have the opportunity of eating the scanty pittance of the poor, and I did not hesitate to taste it.

With the ease of a Frenchman who would not regret being a Chinese, I took the little sticks between my thumb, first, and middle fingers, and I began by taking a few grains of rice, which I carried

to my mouth ; they were firm and crisp, and with the flavour peculiar to this grain ripened in the salt plains of the Tchou-kiang. After this first satisfactory attempt, I took some tao-fou ; I found it insipid ; then, with a boldness natural to those who are inclined to gastronomic cosmopolitism, I mixed the rice, the tao-fou, and the black liquid : it was perfection ; the black liquid was only treacle, or at least a very thick syrup of sugar.

The rice thus arranged was something like rice milk, but it had not that taste of starch, nor that gluey and watery appearance possessed by the horrid soups which the poisoners, lying in ambuscade at the corners of the streets of the most civilised town in the universe (Paris), sell after midnight. On seeing what I was doing, the little Chinese, her mother and her brothers, had noisily exclaimed, at several intervals, *ai-a*, which is peculiar to the lower classes of Canton, and some sailors from the top of their *faï-ting* had added their approbation to this family's expressions of astonishment.

My knowledge of Chinese customs had charmed them ; and when, after having taken some mouthfuls from the young girl's bowl, I returned it to her, accompanied by half a piastre, I had from all sides offers to recommence this fraternal communion. I gave the preference to the bowl of a sailor on board ; it was, as usual, the unknown which tempted me.

The rice was like that of the young girl's : very dry and much swelled. In bursting, the farinaceous matter had spread into silvery lumps, but the condiment accompanying it was not the same : it was a thick substance, of a yellowish colour, and a very decided cheesy taste. This mess was a real Italian *rizzoto*, the Parmesan of which was very strongly flavoured. I ate every grain of it.

When I asked the name of this seasoning, I was informed that it was also tao-fou. I owe my readers the recipe of a production, which, alternately cream and cheese, is nevertheless made without the intervention of any lacteal substance. Haricots are steeped in cold water till they yield to the pressure of the finger ; when they are in this state, they are pounded with a millstone, and the clear liquid which results from them is boiled. After this operation, it is thrown into a sieve, which retains the impure parts, the milk-like liquid which flows through is received in a bowl, and a small quantity of baked plaster of Paris, reduced to very fine powder, and mixed with water, is added to it. An abundant precipitate is immediately formed, of a dull white colour, like alabaster, or of a rather yellowish-white, according to the haricots which have been used. That is tao-fou. This substance is eaten fresh or fermented. When it is fresh, it is very like the white cheeses called *touma* in Provence. It was in

this state that the young tanka girl introduced it to me. When the tao-fou is fermented, it tastes like our strong cheeses.

The Chinese in the southern provinces have an inexplicable repugnance to milk, and to all that results from the diverse manipulations to which it is subjected ; however, they have, by means of an empiric process, certainly the result of chance, fabricated, with a vegetable, a substance which is the best imitation of that which inspires them with so much disgust. Nevertheless, tao-fou, fresh or fermented, will never replace to European palates that thick and unctuous cream which is eaten in Norman farms, nor Sassenage and Roquefort cheeses, nor even Brie or Neufchâtel.

The custom-house officer who accompanied the mission, in his zeal for the industrial interests of France, was desirous of transporting thither the fabrication of tao-fou. All his efforts tended to substitute for our excellent cheeses of Auvergne, Cantal, Normandy, and the Alps, a substance of an inferior quality, and at a much higher price : it was what the worthy man called a discovery. The use of tao-fou in this part of China serves to prove a very important sanitary truth : it is, that in every country, in every zone, and at all times, men have instinctively understood, that they must unite with the natural products on which they feed, food which is fermented or undergoing fermentation.

While I was tasting the popular dishes of the Celestial Empire, the deputies from Pan-se-Chen arrived. They were in a charming vessel, rowed by eight men, which boarded our faï-ting.

The mandarin boats are large barks, light and long, with an elegant pavilion in the middle, the curved roof of which is ornamented by flowers and fantastic animals. They are distinguished from other vessels floating on the river by streamers, on which the titles of the proprietors are written. In the evening lanterns, covered with characters, replace the insignia of official vanity, and have the same effect. These pleasure boats are divided into two rooms, where you can easily isolate yourself by letting down an elegant mat in front of the door which separates them. Callery and I installed ourselves in the state saloon—that is, the one which opens on to the stern; it was surrounded by a bench of hard shining wood, and at short distances were placed small ebony tables. The floor was covered with a carpet made of dog's hair, and the windows were furnished with moveable blinds, admirably carved. Servants brought us two cups of tea on a red Japan tray, and then discreetly withdrew.

"It is necessary," said Callery, when we were alone, "that you should know where you are going to live."

"I do know," I replied; "I am going to my

friend the mandarin Pan-se-Chen, whom badly-brought up people call Poul-tin-Quoy, like his father the merchant."

"You can call him Pan, his father's name, if you please—he has no parvenu's weakness ; but you must be able, if necessary, to point out your residence. Remember, that you live in Tchaoïn-Kiaï—that is, 'The Sound-of-the-tide Street'—in the house Thè-kî-Han, which means 'The Remembrance-of-virtue Factory.' Remember, also, that the Chinese word *han*, which the English pronounce *hong*, is applied to all houses connected with trade."

In order to get to Pan's, we crossed some streets of the floating town ; they were crowded with vessels, but no confusion resulted from this concourse. In other countries, a great crowd of people, and the tumult resulting from it, is an excitement to disorderly conduct and quarrels ; here, on the contrary, it seemed as if each had undertaken to avoid disputes, and to prevent causing others trouble and embarrassment ; there was a continued interchange of kind offices and polite attentions ; sailors and fish-women carefully avoided collisions, and warned those they met of the obstacles they would meet with on their road. The conduct of these poor people says more for the civilisation of China, than all that may be written on the subject ; and it will be understood how remarkable the gentle disposition of these sea-

faring people must be, when it is considered that it was this fact which particularly struck me among so many objects which were new and strange to me.

The house Thè-ki-Han is built partly in the European and partly in the Chinese style : it consists of two storeys, and the roof, which forms a terrace, is paved with granite, which shines in the sun as if strewed with diamonds. On the ground floor are vast magazines, in which are piled up bales of silk, chests of tea, jars full of musk, in fact all the products which European civilisation borrows from the Celestial Empire. Our apartments were on the second floor : they looked on to the river. On our left we had the massive buildings of the factories, on which the colours of the great European nations waved ; opposite, the left bank of the Tchou-kiang, covered with Chinese temples and houses, and the thousand streets of the floating town. It was one of those views which seem like the realisation of an opera fairy scene.

When we were installed, we went to visit the apartments prepared for the reception of M. de Lagrené. They consisted of seven rooms on the same floor. The bed-rooms and saloons were separated by lattice-work, formed of ivory and ebony, incrustated on hard wood in an indescribably fantastic manner. The bed-rooms were concealed from curiosity by silk hangings, fastened to the carved walls.

Our inspection was not in vain. The rooms intended for the women, which according to Chinese ideas constitute the sanctuary of the house or the inner apartment, were ornamented with an infinite number of drawings. They were long strips of paper, on which pastoral scenes were represented. These paintings gave us a singular impression of the way the Eclogue is understood in the Celestial Empire. Watteau's little cupids and adorable shepherdesses would have blushed up to the whites of their eyes on seeing them. In our ideas, Pan's pictures would only have done to illustrate Theocritus, Apulius, or Tongus. Callery could not make the mandarin's servants understand that they ought to remove these landscapes; he was obliged to have recourse to the master himself. Pan, on hearing his explanations, did not conceal his astonishment. Those good Chinese are great heathens! However, all the Bouchers and Watteaus disappeared.

This charming palace, as transparent as a glass house, situated on the Tchou-kiang, that enchanted river, is certainly the most delightful dwelling M. de Lagrené can have occupied during his travels. The furniture of all the rooms presented a mixture of European luxury and Chinese elegance: there were magnificent looking-glasses, English and French clocks, with native toys and ornaments in ivory. Of the nations of the East, the Chinese alone have

seats like ours,—the Malays and Indians sit on the ground on mats and cushions. But the chairs and divans in the Celestial Empire, particularly in the southern provinces, do not at all resemble the elastic furniture which ornaments our drawing-rooms. Those carved chairs, beautifully polished, remind one of seats in church or college benches ; and never, either in pleasure-boats or in the most sumptuous saloons, do you see stuffed furniture. The arm chairs are very massive and excessively heavy ; they are seldom displaced, and the divans are generally fixed to the wall.

A few days after our arrival, M. de Lagrené came to live at the hotel intended for him ; and with the refined urbanity of which he has given so many proofs during his voyage, he placed two of the rooms of his large suite at the disposal of the rear-admiral commanding the French maritime forces in China.

CHAPTER III.

THE TARTAR TOWN—THE CHINESE TOWN—THE FOREIGN
FACTORIES—THE ANGLO-SAXON IN CHINA—A CHINESE
MONEY TESTER—OLD AND NEW CHINA STREETS.

BEFORE traversing the streets of Canton, visiting its shops, conversing with its inhabitants, venturing into this labyrinth of houses, and mixing with this crowd of people, I should like to give the reader an idea of the appearance and position of this celebrated city. This topographical description will be in some measure the clue which I shall put into the hands of those who follow me into the labyrinth.

Canton is situated on the left shore of the Tchou-kiang. It occupies a space which cannot be gone round in less than six hours, stepping out quickly. The city is divided into three distinct parts, joined in a way together ; its shape is a square, stretching from west to east ; it is bounded on the south and west by the river, or, to speak more truly, by the *floating town* ; on the east, by waste and marshy plains ; and on the north, by sloping hills, which by degrees rejoin the mountains of the *snowy clouds* which are seen in the distance.

The three parts which form the capital of Kuang-ton are the suburbs and walled city, which is divided

into the old or Tartar city, and the new or Chinese city. The suburbs, which, like the boulevards in Paris, are the best, handsomest, richest, and most commercial part of Canton, occupy on the south and west the ground between the Tchou-kiang and the walls of the two fortified cities, and on the east, where they lose their importance, some low and muddy land, on which are scattered a few huts. A wall which runs parallel with the river cuts in two the quadrilateral figure in which the official city is enclosed. The Tartar town, which is three times as large as the part called the Chinese town, lies to the north. Later, we shall see that this separation is owing to the minute precautions of a jealous policy.

These twin cities communicate together, and with the immense suburbs, by sixteen gates made in the walls. These sixteen openings are strictly guarded. It is in this double enclosure that the civil and military authorities reside, and entrance is formally denied to barbarians. When you look down from an elevated point on to the inhabited river and immense city, you are struck by the magnificence of the panorama. After having wandered over fertile plains, and after having fatigued itself by following the windings of Tchou-kiang, the moving dwellings of which are confused with the elegant buildings in the suburbs, the eye rests on the curved roofs of the two official cities. From the midst of this mass of houses,

the polygonal towers of two pagodas rise like natural obelisks carved by the hand of time.

Now that the reader has, I hope, an approximate idea of the form and position of the capital of the two Kuangs—that is, of the three populations established on dry land—we will go through its innumerable streets. At the same time, I must inform my travelling companion that we shall not really leave the suburbs : we shall remain upon the legitimate soil. We will not overstep the limits which the distrustful jealousy of the Chinese has placed as a prison during the day, to European vanity. It is intentionally that I use the expression of “prison during the day ;” for, during the night, our conceited countrymen first of all are shut up in a *ghetto*, like the Jews of the middle ages, and could not leave it without danger. They are incessantly menaced by the populace of the suburbs. These inhabitants of dry land have nothing in common with the polite and kind hosts of the floating-houses on the Tchou-kiang ; they are a mob of rogues from Fo-kien and Kuang-ton, filled with hatred and envy. Nothing guarantees a stranger from the attacks of these wretches : the caprice of the moment, the wind which blows, a bad humour, are the only motives of their actions.

These idiots, who like you to visit their fortifications and temples, who, without any evil intention,

give up to you their means of defence, and who expose the objects of their veneration to European scepticism, would bravely cut off your head, if you crossed the threshold of one of their houses—they would stone you if you entered into their walled cities. These horrible creatures, who grovel in the miserable hovels which cover a fetid plain to the east of the suburbs, will not allow strangers to approach the rich dwellings of the Imperial functionaries; these dirty and ragged beggars, who have never, except by a look, passed the lattice-work of the flower-boats, would feel hurt if barbarians elbowed their opulent countrymen on them.

Honour to whom honour is due! Before penetrating into those streets which are exclusively Chinese, we will visit the European *ghetto* and its cosmopolitan population. The factories are built on the south-east point of the suburb nearest to the shores of Tchou-kiang, and they form several streets which are at right angles with the river. Each factory consists of a suite of houses uniformly built, the whole of which resembles a vast building isolated on all sides, and nearly resembling the barracks in which Fourier's phalansteriens wished to shut up mankind. Formerly, there were thirteen similar edifices, which was the reason that the name of Thirteen Factories Street was given to a Chinese street which runs to the north of the European

residences. These monumental constructions, beginning with the Hong-i-ho, or Creek Factory, and ending with the Hong-te-hing, or Danish Factory, extended from east to west. Now, the primitive line still remains, but the interior arrangements have undergone important modifications. It was on the following occasion :—On a day of public diversion, the inhabitants of the suburbs of Canton rushed to the hong I-ho, Tsih-i, and Paou-ho, the English and Dutch factories, and set them on fire. These edifices have not been raised from their ruins—memorable witnesses of the intelligent justice of a Canton mob. Some temporary buildings have been constructed on the ground they occupied, and the foundation is hardly dug for the future English factory.

The Americans inhabit nearly the centre of this little town, and they have absorbed within their limits four ancient hong known by the names of Paou-choun, Ma-ying, Soui, Loung-chun, and Fung-tai. At last, on the 26th of October, 1843, an incendiary, the effect of chance, came to the assistance of the popular demolishers, and destroyed two streets on the west. Whatever be the result of these changes, the little town of the barbarians has preserved its primitive appearance, and some of its streets bear names which seem to indicate that each of them is exclusively inhabited by merchants of the

same nation, to the exclusion of all others. Thus there are a Danish, a Portuguese, a Spanish, and even a French factory ; but these designations are quite arbitrary. In reality, of all the Western nations, the Americans only are at home, and have built at Canton a palace worthy of the conquerors of our age, of the rivals of the English, of the peaceful soldiers of prosperity and industry.

The interests of all the Christian nations in China are intimately united ; and it is to be regretted that the French Government, the natural ally of all free governments, has not joined those of Great Britain and the United States to found on the shores of the Tchou-kiang a real western town, by uniting on one common spot the edifices which, according to the latest treaties, each nation has a right to erect at the open ports for purposes of commerce. This simultaneous act would have shown the Chinese the good understanding between all civilised nations ; it would have insured the safety of our missionaries and merchants much better than the menacing preparations on board the fleets, protected by the flags of England, the United States, and France.

The part appropriated by the barbarians contains, nevertheless, three streets which are completely Chinese. One is celebrated in the memory of sailors. Europeans gave it the name of Hog Lane : in Chinese, San-taou-Lan. It lies between the ruins of the

English hong and to the east of the American hong. Although you do not now see the unclean animal there which gave it its name, that name still belongs to it by just right. It is a kind of low tavern into which the Chinese invite the sailors, to sell them at a low price adulterated and fetid spirits. The numerous shops in this dark passage are at all hours the theatre of the most disgusting and licentious scenes of drunkenness. The two other Chinese streets are better frequented : one called Old China Street, and T'sing-youen by the Chinese, is situated between the French hong and an open place which joins the American hong ; and the other, New China Street, or T'oung-wan, comes after the French factory and precedes the Danish hong.

The banks of the Tchou-kiang, which runs through the district of the hong, present from time to time convenient landing-places, round which are grouped flotillas of tankas, whose proprietors shout to you without ceasing, " My boat, captain ? my boat ? " But as soon as you leave the water's edge, and enter the house of any European merchant, a mournful silence succeeds to this tumult. The only one of these edifices which is worth the trouble of describing, is, as I have already said, the American hong. It is an immense building, the heavy façade of which, with its five doors, admits to five passages, or, to speak more correctly, five long streets. This

phalanstery has only two storeys, and its roof, in the form of a terrace, offers to the proprietors a promenade which is more vast, but not more agreeable, than the square, planted with its trees and flowers, which is in front of it. I know nothing in the world so sad as this silent palace. It reminds you of one of those enchanted habitations in which some capricious fairy has imprisoned for centuries some prince who has denied her power. In the long passages, paved with flags of granite—in the vast and airy storehouses with vaulted roofs—you never meet a woman or a child; you only see a few men of pale complexion wandering about like shadows, and silently giving orders to yellow-faced, half-naked porters, who in their turn obey without a word. There is but one sound which at intervals cheers the hearts of the unhappy captives, and makes them think of their families, from which they are so far distant, and of the joy of being one day seated before the parental hearth. I mean the sound of the piastres falling into the scales! The silvery sound tells them that the fairy who has them in her power is not inexorable, and that soon the joyful ring will sound the hour of their deliverance.

The Americans and the English are the real heroes of this century. In going courageously to seek their fortunes in distant lands, they realise the only honourable conquests of the present time, and like all

men who run great risks, it is not merely the love of money which urges them to these enterprises. These intelligent speculators are not, as is generally thought in France, avaricious usurers ; the majority of them are men gifted with powerful minds, and who, in the delicacy of their sentiments, carry us back to the periods of Amadis and Galaor. It was reserved for our witty nation to discover that these courageous merchants, who condemn themselves to a perilous and voluntary exile in order to share the riches acquired by their own labour with some loved one at home, were devoid of all poetic sentiment, and had ingots of gold in place of hearts ! I have known a great many of these hardy adventurers, who lived in this commercial Bœotia without complaining that they were not understood by the bankers of their own country, and by the tea-dealers of the Celestial Empire, possessing as their sole consolation in the midst of their irksome labour, the hope that one day they would see again some fair head which was then hidden in some corner of Kentucky, in the mountains of Scotland, or the sweet cottages of Albion. I can affirm that the steamer which brings to those sad edifices, the factories, the European or American mail, distributes almost as many soft protestations and tender oaths as commercial bills and inexorable accounts. And those impassible merchants, who unseal without emotion a missive on which some-

times depends their entire fortune, often tremble all over in opening the letter of a young girl, to whom they communicate all their successes. If I had time, I would relate some of these secret histories which have had no witnesses but the cold walls of this severe monument—this commercial monastery—and some English or American cottage, and no intermediaries but some unhappy sheets of paper which arrived at their destination impregnated with marine effluvia, and already several months old! I am sure that these secret dramas, genuine pictures of real life, would be found interesting even after the perusal of our modern novels, whose heroes, in their amorous phrensy, might cleave mountains, rifle pedestrians, and set the universe on fire, in order to obtain their fair one, but who would be incapable of adding up figures and of working like journeymen for her sake.

The ground floor of each factory is devoted exclusively to store-rooms; beneath the sheds are the scales in which the money is weighed, for it is never counted. The weighing concluded, a Chinese is intrusted to examine the piastres. The operator is generally a quasi-gentleman; a man in a long dress of blue silk, with his pig-tail well plaited, and his head protected by a cap, who sits down with his legs crossed by the side of the balance, and examines one after the other every piece of money. This rival

of Arcet and Laurent has no need either of a lamp-stove, nor of a coppel in order to test the money; touch, sight, and smell are sufficient for him. The Chinese tester can easily dispense with taste, but the loss of any other sense would render him unfit for his trade. When he doubts the genuineness of a piece of money, he passes it slowly between his forefinger and thumb, examines it with care, smells it, and then placing it on his left thumb-nail, which is inordinately long, tosses it suddenly in the air, and catching it again on this horny projection, listens attentively to the sound. This last experiment is generally decisive, and the piastre is either accepted or rejected. In the former case he marks it with a puncheon, which bears a Chinese character adopted by the merchant who puts it into his coffers. This mark is sufficient to cause the acceptance of the piece by the retail dealers; and when it is thus stamped, if it is afterwards discovered to be false, it can be given back to the last merchant, who has guaranteed its genuineness. But it can be understood to what inconveniences such a system must give rise; those Chinese who are not very scrupulous, imitate the marks of the most honourable English and American houses, and then take them the false money which is thus fraudulently stamped. Then the tester is called for again, and decides finally as to the lawfulness of the demand.

The piastres are sometimes stamped through with such a number of characters that they are quite disfigured, and look like so much metallic lace. But this accumulation of stamps is intended almost always to conceal some fraud ; either the pieces have not the legal weight, or the holes made by the punching have been filled up with some alloy.

In the great commercial houses, the comprador—that is to say, the man entrusted with the purchases of the house—acts as tester ; but at Macao and Canton there are some persons who make it a special profession, and who go from house to house to verify the sums received. I saw at M. de Lagrené's a man who was a type of the class. When he had money to examine, he took up his position beneath the verandah of the embassy, and went conscientiously to work. But he only used his right hand ; his left seemed to be paralysed, and to be condemned to perpetual repose, the fact being that each finger was surmounted by a nail whose length was greater than that of the finger itself.

These pieces of yellow horn were frightful ; they were like those wax puppets which the conjurors of the streets exhibit with their dirty fingers to the great admiration of little children. He never used his left hand, except when it was necessary to spin some doubtful piastre in the air. The Chinese men of fashion leave these exaggerations to parvenus who

ape the gentleman, and do not wear their nails any longer than ourselves. This man told me that he took a great deal of trouble in order to avoid breaking his hideous claws ; he shut them up every evening in a bamboo case. I proposed to amputate his hand so that he might keep it carefully preserved in a drawer, and thus prevent the great misfortune which he dreaded so much.

The first floor of the American factory is devoted to the offices. The clerks go there the first thing in the morning, and come away at four in the afternoon. From this moment they are free to go and dine and to walk about the enclosure of the square in front of the hong. The whole of the second storey is divided into a multitude of apartments, great and small ; it even includes the most modest cells, so that, still according to the phalansterian principle, each one may find an habitation corresponding to his position and fortune in this magnificent palace.

In the evening, the American garden is the rendezvous of all the European residents, who go there chiefly for the sake of the sea breeze. These reunions, which are composed almost entirely of men, are remarkable for the excellent manner in which all present are dressed. The young merchants are nearly all in yellow gloves, the clergymen of course wearing their white neckerchiefs. This stiffness has a certain beneficial influence ; it does not allow the rela-

tions existing between the exiles to degenerate into undue intimacy. What the French call *camaraderie* has a disastrous effect in the confined space of a ship, or on the small tract of land conceded to the factories; sufficient protection does not exist for the dignity of the individual. A man, whoever he may be, must always lose by being seen every moment without preparation, as by permitting indiscreet questions concerning his intimate impressions and thoughts. The Americans and the English, who have understood this, have imposed a limit to familiarity which is never crossed.

After walking about for some time they return home, assemble for some hours at the house of a friend, or go out upon the terrace of the palace. Alas! it is not, as on the borders of the Bosphorus, the song of a fair odalisque that descends from the height of this aerial promenade. If the voice of a woman is raised in the midst of this group of men, it is certainly one whose discreet lips have never pronounced a tender confession, nor permitted an amorous sigh to escape them. Such is the life of the European merchants—laborious, monotonous, and somewhat contemplative.

Some of these young merchants possess elegant pleasure-boats, in which they row about on the Tchou-kiang. Not being able to make use of their legs in this intolerant land, they are determined, at all

events, to exercise their arms on the water. This fatiguing amusement always provokes the mirth of the corpulent mandarins, who are unable to understand how any one can row or dance for his own pleasure.

The other factories are inhabited by Europeans whose mode of life is quite identical with that which I have just described. At the same time, the merchants of other nations differ essentially in manners, language, and dress from the English and Americans, whose cold, reserved, and dignified attitude is well worthy their imitation.

As one of the streets in the quarter of the factories is called the French hong, I am obliged to speak of it, if only from humility. This double row of ugly houses belongs to my friend Pan-se-Chen. During our stay in China, our country had to hire No. 7, which was called the French Consulate, and it was there that our laborious commercial delegates resided. But upon the departure of M. de Lagrené's mission, France relieved herself of this burden, and for a certain time our flag ceased to fly in this port, where all nations of any importance exhibit their colours with pride. The Government of his Majesty Louis Philippe and that of the Republic had, it is true, a minister plenipotentiary in China, but he lived at Macao! that is to say, at a place where for years past there has not been a single Chinese official, and

where the Governor has scarcely any communication with the official personages of the Celestial Empire. So that we, who unfortunately have scarcely any commercial interests in the country—we, whose diplomatic action ought to be limited to an incessant political intervention in favour of the Catholics of the Celestial Empire—had agents who cared so little for the interests of our fellow-religionists, that, merely from motives of personal convenience, they live at a distance of thirty-five leagues from the residence of the Chinese functionaries. Instead of this, a French *chargé d'affaires* who wishes really to do his duty, ought to keep the cunning mandarins constantly in check; he ought to complain incessantly of the wrongs the Government has committed, of those which it commits now, and of those it may commit at any future period, towards the Catholics. It is only by means of continual and unflagging attacks, that the security of our missionaries and their disciples can be insured.

Leaving the wall which surrounds the American factory, and walking towards the east, we come to a noisy public place, the rendezvous of the Chinese populace; immediately adjacent is the street called "Old China," or, if the reader prefer it, "T'sing-youen;" then the French hong, and afterwards the street called "New China," or "Toung-wan."

These two streets, which have been often compared to our passages, are long alleys paved with slabs of granite, and covered over with mats, which preserve the pedestrian from the rain and the sun. At intervals there are certain ærial edifices of bamboo—kinds of bridges, on which the night-watchmen stand ; and on each side of the street are shops with large windows and blinds. The houses of Old and New China Street consist of only one storey, the greater part of which is occupied by the stores. To form some idea of these two streets of European China, it is sufficient to imagine the gallery of the old Bains Chinois* turned into an entrepôt for all those lacquered and enamelled playthings, and all that common porcelain, which for some years past have blocked up the Palais Royal and several of our passages.

I never saw anything in China so stupidly dull as these two insipid passages and their trade. During three parts of the day there is not a soul to be seen ; but as soon as a European heel resounds on the granite, every door exhibits a Chinaman with a naked head and a flat face, lighted up with an assumed smile, which is intended to tempt a customer to his shop. The most remarkable thing in T'sing-youen and T'oung-wan is the perfect similarity of the

* On the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris.

houses, the shops, and the proprietors : the houses are not much more than four yards broad ; the shops are carefully lacquered and varnished ; and the proprietors, who are very stout, very fat, and as yellow as ochre, are all dressed in long blue robes, and fan themselves automatically with screens of painted silk.

Old China Street and New China Street form really, a part of the European *ghetto* ; never does a Chinaman venture into them, especially if he wants to purchase anything. A native will no more go and be taken in by the traders there, than a Parisian will visit certain shops into which provincials and foreigners plunge. The shops in these two Chinese streets of the factories are, in reality, only make-shifts : if, some fine day or other, the sovereign mob of Canton were to prohibit the barbarians from repairing to the suburbs, a traveller, pressed for time, might, in an extreme case, purchase his curiosities in the above thoroughfares. He might also, on his return, assert that he had seen real Chinamen and brought back real Chinese porcelain and fans. Such, in truth, are these two celebrated passages, of which people talk so much. I can swear that, if there were nothing more curious to be seen at Canton, it would be better for anyone to remain in a *faï-ting*, in the midst of the floating city. I have described, as minutely and as exactly as I could, the European quarter of Canton.

It is composed of some ten airy and solitary streets, and is inhabited, at most, by 200 barbarians, with red or black hair.

We will now enter China.

CHAPTER IV.

PHYSIC STREET—A CHINESE CROWD—A CANTONESE
PICKPOCKET—BEGGARS AND BARBERS.

HONEST travellers, who have visited Canton, have related twenty times the endeavours they have made to enter the walled city, the dangers they have encountered and the semi-success they have met with. Semi-success is an expression which disguises a poor falsehood; it replies beforehand to the indirect question :

“ Well, what did you see ? ”

“ Upon my honour ! ” says, emphatically, the boaster, who has his answer ready ; “ I had passed the great gate of Chin-se-Mun, the only one which gives access to the Tartar city, when—— ”

I spare you the remainder of this common-place, tiresome, and absurd story. Poor people ! the sterility of their imagination is a eulogy on their credulity ! I own that, if I had felt the want of persuading my readers I had penetrated into the walled city, I should have adopted a completely different course. My experience of things human taught me, a very long time ago, that the Unknown usually conceals a deception, and I should simply

have expressed my surprise at having seen nothing surprising ! But, instead of the impressions I might have described, had I penetrated into the Tartar city, I will relate how it happened that I did not go there, and, I will answer for it, the reader will have lost nothing through my not having done so.

After all, the Chinese who have immured the Europeans in a *ghetto*, have shut themselves up in a similar prison, and the vast enclosure inside which they have retired differs from the other only by the melancholy originality of certain official residences. To speak the truth, there exists only one joyous, poetical, noisy, and laborious Canton ; this is the Canton of pleasure, of industry, and of business—that is to say, the suburbs and the floating city. This is not enclosed in gray, creviced walls ; it extends freely along the banks of the river ; the brick and granite houses follow, to the south and the east, the peaceful circumvolutions of the Tchou-kiang ; they line canals more animated than the canals of Venice, and the hundred residences at anchor rock to and fro incessantly on the liquid ground which supports them. This is the Canton we are now about to traverse in palanquin, on foot, and in a boat, beginning at that portion which is established on the main land.

The day after our installation in the street of the Noise-of-the-Tide—Tchao-in-kiaï—Callery entered my room at seven o'clock in the morning.

"We will traverse," he said, "Old China Street, go down Chap-tam-hong-kiaï, or the street of the Thirteen Factories, and, thence, visit some of the shops in Ta-teong-kiaï, or Physic Street, as the English say ; so prepare to set out."

On the previous evening we had merely gone through the hong and the two passages I have described. We embarked at the foot of the stairs of our charming house of Thè-ki-Han, the last step of which is constantly washed by the Tchou-kiang. Two charming tanka girls, A-Moun and A-Fay, made their egg-shell glide over the calm water, and put us out at the landing-place which precedes Old China Street. While going along this silent passage, I said to Callery :—

"Canton is decidedly mournful ; the bazaar of Macao is dirty, stinking, and filthy, but there is life about it. This passage, so straight and so correct, is enough to give any one the horrors. I believe the Chinese people is an amphibious people ; it only lives well on the water. What a charming view I enjoy, from my room, over the Tchou-kiang !"

"That is, indeed, the effect Canton produces upon me," said Callery, with indifference.

We continued our journey.

We came out on a sort of market, the aspect of which agreeably surprised me ; it was a very little fish market. In large tubs were swimming enor-

mous round-headed chub-fish, resembling large tadpoles, and succulent *gouramiers*, which Creole sensuality has already naturalised at Bourbon. Beside these swimming gentry, then unknown to me, I again beheld the vigorous frogs and long-necked turtles of the bazaar at Macao.

Callery scarcely allowed me to cast a single glance at these denizens of the Tchou-kiang, but dragged me off to the street of the Thirteen Factories. This street is so named, because, as I have already said, it runs along the quarter of the hong's. My guide did not allow me to stop, but pushed me, so to speak, into Physic Street. On falling into this gulf, I lost all consciousness; I experienced something analogous to what a drowning man feels. Without reflecting, without uttering a word, I allowed myself to be carried along by the human current, which flowed between the two banks of houses. Lost in the midst of this stream of shaven heads, hanging queues, long and short robes, and yellow faces, the owners of which were fanning themselves, I felt nothing, I saw nothing, and I allowed myself to be rolled along by the current, as a corpse or the trunk of a tree, is carried down a river!

When I arrived at Macao, I had been eight months at sea; during the various periods we had been in port, we had passed over deserted roads much more frequently than we had walked in the

streets of large cities. My eyes and ears, accustomed to the noise of the waves, and the solitudes of the ocean, were no longer used to the tumults of crowds, and the sight of large multitudes of men, and, on passing from the Portuguese into the Chinese city, I was struck with astonishment. At Canton, my surprise amounted to stupefaction. Besides, at Macao, the crowd which blocked up the bazaar was noisy, but almost motionless—that is to say, it moved about on the same spot; it was a lake traversed by currents; in the present instance, however, the lake had overflowed its banks, and ran between two sinuous and irregular rocks. And yet, in these waves of population, among this compact crowd, we did not see a single woman, a single child, a single carriage, a single wagon, a single horse, a single dog, or a single cat; we beheld only men; everywhere men: men in silk robes, men in pointed hats, men fanning themselves, men loaded with goods, or chair-porters. If we were to stop, for a few instants, the current of women, children, and of rolling and creaking machines, which incessantly traverse the principal streets of Paris, the latter would suddenly be silent and deserted. Let the reader imagine, from this, the enormous population of Canton.

The first thing which struck my attention in the midst of this confusion was the good appearance of the houses, generally only of one storey; the luxury

of the shops, and the magnificent signboards, arranged laterally or transversely at the entrance of the stores, and displaying, upon a black, red, or blue ground, admirable characters, gilt and carved in relief. Whichever way you turned your eyes, to the right or to the left, you always beheld the captious signboards of the traders, which are really charming ornaments, encircling their doors. In no country, not even at Paris, have people ever invented such ingenious means of puffing goods by exhibiting them, and of *speaking to the eyes*. Twenty times, on catching a glimpse of the strange objects which flitted past me as in a dream, I was tempted to stop; but, under the influence of the irresistible impulse of the crowd, I kept going on and on, obeying, without accounting for it, the magnetism exerted by large assemblies of men. Much more than the poetic lake of Monsieur de Lamartine, was this human river the image of the ocean of ages, on which we sail without ever putting into port!

For more than an hour I had been in the state of Ahasuerus, when the sound of an enormous box on the ear, which re-echoed behind me, caused me to start from my slumber. I turned round suddenly: the crowd had stopt; a Chinaman, with bare feet, and dressed in a pair of trousers not coming further than half-way down his legs, and a cham of dirty cloth, with his head badly shaven, and his queue in disorder, was rubbing his cheek, without

saying anything, while Callery was explaining to the spectators, in the coolest manner possible, that he had surprised the individual in question *faisant le mouchoir*.* The Chinese applauded the explanation, and the column resumed its course. Thus, at the very first steps I took in a large Chinese city, I was able to vouch for the presence of that representative of a very advanced stage of civilisation, the pickpocket; that decent thief who despises violence, and exercises his calling prudently, without noise, without disturbance, and without ever employing brute force.

This was not, however, the first time I had been in the presence of these professionals of the Celestial Empire; and before proceeding further I will relate a little story for the benefit of those among my readers who may make a voyage to China at some future period.

One day, at Macao, I was walking back with Callery to his residence. While going along, he was speaking in an animated manner, and had got a magnificent parasol under his arm. Passing the corner of a street, near the bazaar, my friend stopped to indulge in a demonstration, after the fashion of the natives of southern climates, who paint at the same time that they describe a subject. He had scarcely commenced his explanation, how-

* Equivalent to the English slang phrase, *faking a cly*.

ever, before a Chinaman snatched his parasol from him, and flew off like a bird. Thank Heaven, Callery is a good runner, and darted off after the thief; but the latter had the start, and disappeared before my friend could come up with him. This comical scene set me off laughing furiously, and I was still so engaged when Callery came back to me. I must mention that he was in a very bad humour, but that could not calm my hilarity. We continued on our road, he cursing, and I laughing. We had not proceeded ten paces before I felt my hat fly off. I turned round suddenly and saw the Chinaman, who was running away with it, take the same road as Callery's robber had done. I did not pursue him; not I! I stood still, so as to laugh at leisure, and admire the blackguard's velocity. In this way we returned to Callery's, he without his parasol, and I without my hat.

After the incident of the handkerchief we at last stopped. Callery gave two or three small coins to his poor devil of a thief to console him for having made a failure, and we entered a shop. While my friend was talking to the proprietor, I stationed myself at the door to watch the interminable procession, which traverses incessantly the streets of Canton, as it filed passed me. The passengers were little citizens, wearing the long blue robe, the violet camail, and the black silk cap; members of the lower classes, dressed in blue nankeen; beggars

covered with rags, or dressed in rattan mats; hawkers, itinerant barbers, dentists, restaurateurs, and dealers in sweetmeats. In the midst of these plebeians moved mandarins carried in their massive chairs by four robust young fellows; rich merchants and young literary men, comfortably installed in their chairs of light bamboo. At times certain portable cells strongly excited my curiosity; they were veiled from all eyes, and presented so discreet a physiognomy that I presumed they contained the *joys of the interior apartments*. I was not mistaken. They were young women going out to pay visits. They were usually accompanied by one or two duennas, who walked between the shafts of the palanquin, hiding their faces with their fans.

Everyone went on peaceably and in good order, without too much jostling; but something came to throw the crowd into confusion, and that was long files of porters, who, covered only by a broad hat and a pair of trousers, carried, balanced at the two extremities of a pole, bales of goods, and traversed the compact mass at a trot, holloaing out for the way to be cleared, and resolutely knocking over whoever did not promptly get on one side on hearing the "Lay! lay! lay!" which is the "look out" of the country. Though I particularly mention the "lay, lay" of the porters, it must not be concluded that the other supernumeraries of this scene were dumb; every trader, on the contrary, utters his

own particular cry, and each one has his own manner of attracting attention. From all these combinations of voices there results an infernal hubbub, in the midst of which the barbers are distinguished by the originality of their instrumentation. They pinch a little iron rod, the metallic sonorousness of which resembles the vibrations of a gigantic double-bass, and thus fulfil the duties of accompanists in this horrible concert.

Before the shops, at every street-corner, and along the houses, were to be seen groups of beggars, blind men keeping close to the walls and guiding themselves by a pole, jobbing tailoresses patching up and mending old clothes, and barbers shaving some decrepit old man, or curling the hair of some street fashionable. The beggars enjoy a singular privilege at Canton : they may station themselves at the door of any shop, singing and striking their pieces of bamboo against each other for hours together, while the proprietor has not the right to drive them away ! These poor devils are not obliged to move off until they have received alms ! A person must have undergone the torture of this singing and this discordant noise to understand the exorbitant nature of the custom ; a concert of Auvergnats, and the noise of saucepans and coppers, are harmonious compared to these performers in rags. I have often, very often, seen the obstinacy of these tatterdemalions pitted against the avarice of the

shopkeepers, but the latter always finished where they ought to have begun—that is to say, by parting with a few sapecs.

In a country where everyone wears a queue—not a villanous little wretched slender queue like that which used to grease the collars of our fathers' coats, but a good thick plait descending from the sinciput to the calf—the reader will perceive what importance, practical and social, the barbers must have achieved! They take a man in his cradle, and do not leave him till the day he enters the tomb; if they only chose to employ the influence at their command they might revolutionise China. The Figaros of the Central Empire constitute a most considerable corporation. A Protestant clergyman, who indulges in statistics after the fashion of M. Charles Dupin, assured me that there were more than 20,000 at Canton! There are itinerant barbers, barbers in their own room, barbers with shops, and barbers who stand at the corners of the streets, like the Paris *commissionnaires*. I have very often sent for the barber from the corner, and never had any reason to regret it.

This artist employs no soap; he simply moistens the skin several times; he then scrapes his customer with a razor resembling a clasp-knife without a spring, broken in half. This wretched blade, two inches long and one broad, is fitted into a piece of wood as a handle; but, however pitiable their ap-

pearance, these instruments are excellent ; you scarcely feel them run over your skin. When the itinerant barbers pass through a street, they cause the long pincers of which I have previously spoken, and the branches of which do the duty of a tuning-fork, to vibrate ; this is their manner of announcing their presence. The penetrating sound passes through every fissure, and the customer, having thus received notice, sends for the artist if his services are needed. But the lower classes are not so particular ; they entrust their heads simply to the street barbers. The only stock in trade which the latter possess is a stool, a tub, a case containing two or three razors, a strop, a pair of pincers, and a little instrument made of bamboo, the use of which I will state presently.

It is no rare occurrence to see, in the bye-streets of Canton, thirty or forty Chinamen, one after the other, as motionless as the old wig blocks, and on whom the barbers of the Celestial Empire are performing all the operations of their trade. The following is the mode of proceeding : They begin by washing the head and shaving that portion of the body : having done this, they untie the queue, which they carefully comb and plait ; armed with long pincers, they then clear the ears and the nose from the parasitical hairs that encroach upon them. Moreover, they indulge in a most delicate practice : with the aid of the little bamboo rod of which I

have spoken, and which terminates in a tuft of carded cotton, extremely fine, they sweep, so to say, the eyeball—that is to say, they pass this light feather-broom under the eyelids, all round the eye, and inside the ear.

Such is the care bestowed by the Chinese barbers on the heads of their customers, taken in their entirety; but their solicitude does not stop here. They examine the feet, to see whether the nails are properly cut, and that none of those horrible indurations, corns, invade them; after this examination is over, they shampoo the person shaved. The mode of shampooing in the Celestial Empire differs essentially from that practised in Arabian baths. The individual operated on is seated on a chair with a back. He is naked to the hips, and his body is leaning forward. The barber begins by drumming with the flat of his hand from the lower part of the loins up as far as the shoulders; he then kneads the same parts, and once more begins drumming. When this is done, the customer squares himself conveniently on his seat, with his own back resting firmly against that of the chair, and the operator repeats the same manœuvres on the parts near the sternum. During this last phase of the operation, the Chinaman closes his eyes, while his whole physiognomy expresses a sentiment of comfort and satisfaction which it is impossible to contemplate without being seized with a fit of hilarity.

I was, one day, going through the streets of Tin-hay with an English officer. As we were passing a barber's shop, we stopped to see an individual shampooed : he was a burly tradesman, whose face, breast, and neck, resembled the plump, yellow rump of a fat goose. The sybarite had his eyes closed ; he was smiling, and breathing loudly, and had a face as resplendent as that of one of the elect. While contemplating him, my companion was seized with a mad idea. These soldiers are so coarse ! Without the barber perceiving what he was doing, he seized a pail of water with both hands, and threw the contents, from a distance of three paces, over the torso of the beatified tradesman. On receiving this inundation, hurled with a steady hand, the sensual child of the Central Empire bounded up to his feet. It was the first and only time I ever saw a Chinaman really in a rage. He foamed at the mouth ; he stamped his feet ; he skipped about ; he bellowed ! But the good Chinese have no idea of giving an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and the Chinaman in question did not even think of throwing the empty pail at the head of the practical joker.

The barbers' shops are, in China, what they formerly were in Europe, a place of meeting for idlers and scandalmongers ; it is there that tittle-tattle and ill-natured stories are bandied about ; for China, too, has its slanderous chronicle ! Thus we see, that their civilisation, which is considered so

eccentric, after all greatly resembles our own. The poor people, however, whom we accuse of being deficient in delicacy, would not permit those "artists in hair" to glide into houses, for the purpose of executing diplomatic missions, which French Figaros eagerly undertake. The barbers never approach the interior apartments, and the women have their hair dressed by their female servants, their mothers, their sisters, and friends of their own sex. In acting thus, I think this people give us a lesson of propriety and good taste. The Chinese, by employing barbers to take care of their nails, have been scientifically logical. The man who cuts the hair ought necessarily to devote his attention to all the horny expansions of the body, and tend even the eyes; for, if you ask naturalists of the school of M. de Blainville, you will learn that the nails are agglomerated hair, and that even an eye is nothing more than a pilous organ, greatly expanded.

There is still another point of resemblance existing between French and Chinese barbers: the latter are *perruquiers* as well. When the queue has undergone the irreparable injuries of time, the barber steps in, and fits an artificial prolongation to the rare white hairs time has not shaved off. Moreover, in this nation of extra-oriental civilisation, these petulant and babbling artists occupy a position analogous to that which they hold among ourselves; they are ranked a little above servants.

Hair is, in China, an object of considerable trade. In a charming little work, entitled *La Coiffure, les Yeux et les petits Pieds*, Natalis Rondot informs us, that a false queue costs, at Shanghai, only two hundred and sixty sapecs, or, in other words, ninety centimes. It is really not worth while to be without one !

The street Ta-teong-kiaï has been called Physic Street by the English, on account of the multitude of druggists' shops it contains ; but the laboratories are not more numerous there than the shops of the dealers in lanterns, curiosities, and stuffs. It traverses the whole length of the suburbs, from east to west, and, on account of its immense extent, is one of the most frequented thoroughfares in Canton. In the description I have just given of it, I have endeavoured to convey an idea of the noise; the movement and the activity which always reign there, and, since I have taken it as a type of the business streets, I will now describe one of the houses in it. This specimen will be sufficient to enable the reader to understand the internal and external arrangement of all the little edifices devoted to retail trade.

CHAPTER V.

CHINESE SHOPS—THE GOD OF RICHES—CHINESE SHOP-KEEPERS—CHINESE WATCHMEN.

THE Chinese have an antipathy to everything like symmetry in the decoration of an apartment. Any one, on seeing the inside of their rooms, would say that diversity is their only motto; in everything, however, relating to costume and the exteriors of their habitations, the Chinese restrict themselves to fixed rules, which impart the most monotonous character to their apparel and architecture. People following the same profession, and having the same social habits, are dressed uniformly, and housed uniformly. Thus the description I am about to give applies exclusively to all the houses with signboards, whether the sign be that of a druggist or a jeweller, a glassman or an enameller, a weaver or a tailor—the only difference is their stock-in-trade. A tradesman's house has only one storey; it consists of the shop, or principal room, on the basement; a backshop; an upper gallery, communicating with the storey below by means of a staircase; two rooms adjoining the gallery, and an uncovered terrace. The back shop, according to the profession, serves

as a store, a laboratory, or a dining-room ; the gallery is, properly speaking, nothing more than a warehouse for the shop, containing a reserve of the articles sold, which are arranged in it with great order ; the two little rooms adjoining, usually encumbered with chests and bales, afford an asylum during the night to two or three shopmen, while the terrace is used for airing goods that have been a long time warehoused, to beat stuffs, and, in the case of the druggists, to dry plants.

As I have already said, the shop-fronts are encircled outside by magnificent signs, admirably varnished, and having gilt characters ; those which are placed vertically present a double front, forming an angle towards the street, so that you perceive them from whichever side you come. You enter the shop by a broad opening, destitute of anything like windows or doors. To the left, on the threshold itself, you perceive in the wall, a small niche consecrated to the Chinese Mercury, the God of Riches, before whom chips of wood, more or less odoriferous, are burning incessantly.

The jolly little god is seated, with his legs crossed ; he has got a pot-belly, and smiles, as though he meant to say : “ Of all the gods, I am the most honoured,” and, upon my word, he is right. His little cell is most carefully attended to ; the roof of his small temple is always smoked by the offerings ; and, on a little red tablet, is traced

an inscription, which I translate thus: "You who enter, say a friendly word to the god, that he may not forget to make my fortune."

The counter, placed either on the right or left of the entrance, though more frequently on the left, stretches quite to the back of the shop, where it forms a right angle, and is continued, facing the door, up to the wall. This arrangement isolates the purchaser, and separates him completely from the trader. Behind the latter, in pigeon holes, kept very neat, and on charming shelves, are ranged the articles in which he deals: ironmongery, drugs, or stuffs. The part reserved for customers is only remarkable for the fine inscriptions which line the wall, and a row of elegant chairs. The inscriptions are commercial sayings, equivalent to "Credit is dead," or very ingenious puffs. Somebody translated me one of them, relating to a kind of Pâte Regnauld, and which is called at Peking, paste of ass's skin! A certain French doctor is not the only person who has rivals in China; there is also a whole host of Giraudeau-de-Saint-Gervaises, whose prospectuses are displayed on the walls of the druggists' shops. Who will say, after this, that the civilisation of this country does not resemble ours!

The portion of the shop which faces the door is that which the Chinese ornament with most care. The centre of this space is frequently occupied, in the case of the druggists, by a handsome nickel urn,

and, in that of other tradesmen, by the most striking stuffs, and the most precious vases. About four inches above this display is an altar consecrated to some tutelary genius, or to the paternal lares; styled by foreigners the altar of ancestors. The little chapel is, in some sort, surrounded by a kind of wood lace; the solid parts of these specimens of carved work are gilt and varnished in different colours; red drapery is seen behind the openings, and little figures dressed in silk, and arranged upon kinds of obelisks, are half concealed under tinsel pinking and artificial flowers, similar to those which Hoffman saw blooming in the gardens of his dreams.

The head of the establishment is seated gravely behind his counter, at the spot nearest the entrance. If he is a druggist, and happens to be old, he wears an enormous pair of tortoise-shell barnacles, the lenses of which, made of rock crystal, are as big as the bottom of a glass. This optical apparatus is kept on the nose by two strings, each having at the end a small weight of jade or lead hanging behind the ear like the pear-shaped ear-drops of a fine lady of former times; the strings replace the branches of our spectacles. From the place where he is seated, the master keeps an eye on the shopmen, smiles at his customers, talks to them while they are being served, and writes his letters. The *abacus* with

the moveable balls, is always near him, as well as his account-books, his pincers, and the piece of granite, marble, or slate, which serves as his ink-horn.

When business is over for the day, the tradesman makes up his accounts ; superintends the closing of the establishment ; and then, leaving one or two persons in care of it, goes into the walled city, or some distant street of the suburbs, to his wife, or his wives, and children, thus leaving behind the counter, to resume them next day, the cares of business, and the bore and mistakes of speculation. This is a general custom in China. Tradesmen of anything like importance never let their wives and children reside in their houses of business ; there are too many dun-flies buzzing about those noisy places. The Chinese let the objects of their affections share in the comfort they have laboriously acquired, and in their domestic enjoyments, but spare them the material cares and anxieties of life. I have, however, seen numerous exceptions to this rule, especially in the northern part of the empire ; in the southern portion, you find only a few poor tradespeople, in a little way of business, who depart from it.

A large portion of the houses in the suburbs resembles the one I have just described ; thus the streets, so lively during the day, are deserted at

night, and the watchman who keeps guard over their tranquillity may frequently sleep all night without being disturbed. This requires explanation. Immediately night has closed in, the entrance of each street is secured by a gate, and every citizen who leaves his house is bound to carry, or have carried before him, a lantern, with his name written on it. When any one wants to pass from one quarter to another, his name is entered in a register at every street through which he passes. The next day, if any offence has been committed, all the strangers, who have passed by the scene of the crime the previous night, are hunted up, but if they can give an account of their actions they are not molested. In this case, notice is given to the inhabitants of the district, that they have to discover the culprit. If they do not succeed, they all pay a fine proportioned to their fortune, in order to indemnify the persons wronged.

Thus we see that, by this system, all the citizens are interested in preventing crime; consequently, they pay for watchmen, for the light that burns at the entrance to each street, and the look-out men, at certain distances, upon bamboo scaffoldings, to discover any fires. These men correspond with each other by means of signals, which appear to be borrowed from Sudre's system; it is by means of gongs that they transmit their discoveries to each

other. The vibrations of these instruments, booming through the silence of the night, fill the air with a lugubrious harmony, which, on more than one occasion, has caused the traveller, recently arrived in this strange city, to shudder.

CHAPTER VI.

A DINNER WITH A MANDARIN—RAT, SWEETCAKES,
AND CHATEAU-MARGAUX—THE CITY INSIDE THE
WALLS—THE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

IN the evening, on returning to our charming house, Thè-ki-Han, we found Pan-se-Chen waiting for us. The worthy Mandarin had come to keep us company and dine with us. In order that we might not be too lonely, he had invited two commercial delegates, MM. Bondot and Renard, to meet us. We were served in the European fashion—that is to say, a Chinese servant, the pupil of some horrible English cook, had prepared a series of those insipid bits of fried or roasted meat which people eat in London with potatoes. We gulped down, sadly enough, the culinary inventions due to the anything but gastronomical genius of the Anglo-Saxon race, when, duly displayed upon a handsome silver dish, there appeared a species of game, which is not treated so magnificently in Europe. This was a rat, a real rat, a surmulot. Nothing was wanting, neither head nor tail. We could even see that the defunct was no longer young: the incisors descending from its upper jaw were long, and as yellow as two old fish forgotten at the bottom of a card-box. I do not know

whether Pan perceived the impression produced on me by this denizen of the sewers, but he felt bound to assure us as to its descent.

“Be kind enough to explain to your friends,” he said to Callery, “that this animal comes from the rice-fields inundated by the Tchou-kiang: he was caught far from the centre of population; far from the muddy gutters of cities. In his infancy he played at the feet of the banana-trees and *bitchis*, and, at a later period, fed on the sweet stalks and farinaceous grains of rice. At good tables, these rural and innocent rats are the only ones served up: the city rats, defiled with mud and living on stagnant waters, are left for the coolies and porters. It is the same with cats: a gastronomist eats wild cats, but despises the familiar inmates of our houses, that lie on our roofs and burrow in our cellars.”

As we see, it is the everlasting story of tame rabbits and wild rabbits, although the one are no better than the other. I know there are people who, while eating them, console themselves with these subtle distinctions. However, we had no need to be so completely edified on the descent of the rodent, to induce us to taste it; we were free from prejudice. We took some on our plates, and unanimously thought it very bad. Was its age the cause? I do not know. But this did not prevent us from doing honour to the eccentric dish, and, when there was

nothing left but the tail, M. Renard took it, put it in his memorandum book, and preserved it as a reminiscence of the dinner. Of how many stories has not this tail been the subject in the hands of an old commercial traveller—of a witty commercial traveller?

I must charge myself with an act of baseness. I did all I could to make Pan understand that I did not like rats, but that M. de Lagrené was very fond of them, and that he ought to have some served up for him every day, because they were a kind of game very scarce in France. But Callery would not lend himself to the wicked joke. Thanks to this reserve on the part of our dear interpreter, M. de Lagrené was deprived of the pleasure of seeing these long-tailed rodents on his table.

But our host had a more agreeable surprise in store for us. When we came to the dessert, a flat dish, covered with a red lacquered cover, was placed on the table. On it was written :—"Kneaded and prepared in my house of mourning." Pan told us it contained cakes sent us by his thirteen wives. He took off the cover, and we admired a multitude of little cakes and small, fatty, sweet tit-bits, cut up with charming art. When we reflected that it was Pan's charming daughters and the wives, fragile and trembling as the foliage of the willow, of this intrepid husband, who had prepared, on purpose for

us, these sweets, strongly aromatised, we could find no expressions strong enough to describe how exquisite their flavour appeared. These said cakes of short paste were really good, very good—Julien, by the way, makes better.

I have said the inscription traced upon the cover ran thus :—"Prepared in my house of mourning." This is a Chinese custom. Pan was then in mourning, and was bound, according to the usages of his country, to state, under all circumstances, the loss which had overtaken him. It is thus that, even in Paris, I have eaten at Callery's some preserves of which our Mandarin had made him a present, and which also bore the obligatory inscription,—“Preserves made in 1846, in my house of mourning.”

The Chinese, initiated by the English in European manners, believe that all Western nations indulge in *pass wine*. Our good friend Pan, therefore, true to the laws of hospitality, determined on practising with us this good Britannic custom. He had a bottle of excellent Château-Margaux brought up, and, after a servant had carefully filled our glasses, our amiable Mandarin, like a man worthy of living in Aquitania, took the crystal vase, and, placing it between his eye and the light, to admire the diaphanous spirits playing about in the liquid garnet, said to Callery :—

“Of all European drinks, this is that which I

prefer ; I am completely accustomed to it. When I have been drinking this wine, I can smell in the recesses of my palace a perfume preferable to that of the la-meï, which sweetens the mountains of Hiang-chan !”

Callery communicated to us Pan's words, and we exclaimed spontaneously,—

“ *Dignus, dignus es entrare !*”

We would willingly have embraced him.

After the homage thus paid to this joyous product of the West, the Mandarin desired that I should be asked how I liked Canton. Thanks to the good humour I was in, my answer must have peculiarly flattered his national self-love. However, on concluding, I told him I deplored having been able to see only half of Canton. Pan did not at first understand my meaning, but when Callery explained to him the regret I felt at not being able to penetrate into the walled city, he burst out laughing, and replied :

“ Why, the city inside the walls is not as fine as that outside them. If it were preferable, I should live in it. Every day rich men leave the enclosed part, and settle upon the banks of the stream, for the purpose of breathing the air which is rendered fresh by the water ; while men who have become rich never return into the Tartar city.”

“ But,” I returned, “ there are numerous palaces, temples, and elegant houses there.”

"Without doubt there are ; but not one of these palaces is equal to my house in beauty ; the very streets in which they are erected are more melancholy than the others ; all these edifices are surrounded by walls which hide them from the view. The figures alone, painted on the outer doors, denote the dignity of the proprietors."

"Yes, I understand that. But what life ! what a multitude of people must elbow each other in the streets, since the suburbs resemble ant-hills. In the city—the true city—the people must run against each other and be mingled together like a swarm of bees flying away from any spot."

"It is precisely the contrary which is the case !" exclaimed Pan. "Most of the streets are as deserted as those of a village, and the most frequented ones are far less noisy than the Chinese quarter in Macao !"

"I do not care for that," I added, obstinately ; "I should like to get inside, were it only to behold a thousand strange scenes, to note a thousand eccentric customs, and, in a word, to observe a Chinese population left to itself."

"I sometimes think Europeans a little mad," said Pan, shaking his head. "Why should you suppose the men behind the walls of defence different from those outside ? Both the former and the latter are at home, and they in no wise change their customs, whether you observe them or no."

"I know that it is a settled thing," I said with resignation, "and that you will not allow the barbarians to come among you. But at any rate you will allow that it would be very important for me, who have come so far for the purpose of seeing your cities and observing your manners, to visit a large city inhabited by the tsun-tun (viceroy), the fou-yuen (lieutenant-governor), the tséan-keun (Tartar general), the keo-yuen (literary chancellor), the pouchin-tze (receiver-general), and, lastly, all the officials of a viceroyalty of twenty-seven million of inhabitants ; and which, in addition to all this, possesses a population of rich citizens, literary men, students, and soldiers, and the monumental streets of which are intersected with canals on which thousands of vessels are riding."

At this enumeration, Pan was seized with a fresh fit of gaiety. He then replied, very tranquilly :

"If it is absolutely necessary for your happiness to visit the walled city, we will introduce you ; but remember my prediction : when you return safe and sound, you will regret having incurred real danger for so little. In the first place, you cannot in any manner get in with your European clothes ; even those of your nation who pretend to have passed in their usual dress the threshold of Chin-se-Moun, or of Tai-pin-Moun, are guilty of an impudent lie ; the guard that keeps watch at the entrance is vigilant,

and nothing diverts it from its duty. You will, therefore, put on our apparel ; you will conceal your eyes beneath barnacles of tea-stone ; you will shade your face behind a fan ; and, thus packed up, you will be carried in by my coolies in a chair. But, in spite of these precautions, your spectacles may come off, and you may utter a cry ; if you should then be recognised by the populace, you and I run the greatest danger ; they will rush on you as on an enemy, and set fire to my house as that of a traitor."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed ; "nothing of the sort will happen. At any rate, let us try."

At these words, Pan raised his hands towards heaven, as if he despaired of making me hear reason, and continued :

"Listen to me ; and if you carry out your mad notions, you will see I have not deceived you. The new town, or Chinese town, is not finer than T'sin-chan, or the bazaar at Macao ; and I would not change Thè-ki-Han for the palace of Ki-In or that of the Hoppo, both of which are in the south-western part of the city. The old or Tartar city, with the exception of three or four streets, similar to the Hoèi-gai-kiaï (the Street of Benevolent Affection), which extends from the Chin-tun-Moun Gate to the Chin-se-Moun Gate, contains only narrow, tortuous lanes. The houses of these fetid passages are built of earth and bamboo. The five-storeyed tower is the most

remarkable monument in this portion of the town; but, as it is stuck on the summit of one of the hills up which the ramparts climb, you can perceive it quite as well from any elevated spot as if you were on the ground which surrounds it. This edifice, called Ou-tsen-Lann, and generally supposed to be a pagoda, is an historical monument that is carefully preserved: it was the villa of one of the kings of the country.

“The temples in the space within the walls are not architecturally more elegant and grandiose than those in the suburbs. The most spacious and most beautiful is that of Kouan-heaou-Tze; it stands in the Tartar town, at the north-west point. Like nearly all religious edifices, it is surrounded by grounds, let out to persons who cultivate them, and the revenue of which is devoted to maintaining the bonzes. These large cultivated plots, where rice, pe-tsaï, pai-taou, and various other vegetables, grow in the open air, lend these bonzeries the appearance of those solitary places where sages formerly went to meditate. But, as soon as you pass the gate, you perceive you are in the centre of a corrupt city. The court-yards are filled with dirty beggars, worn to the bones by misery, playing cards, quarrelling, or asleep on the ground, waiting for the alms the priests give them. If such are the scenes of which you are in search, you will witness a similar spectacle in the

court-yard of the pagoda of Chan-chou-gan, and in that of the temple of Hae-chou-Tze.

"It is these vast religious edifices, and these palaces surrounded by high walls, which give the walled city its silent and mournful look. In the quarters occupied by these monuments, everything makes a sensation : the procession of a mandarin, or the least noise which breaks the customary silence, causes the idle inhabitants to run to their thresholds.

"The description I have just given, applies to the elegant streets and the respectable quarters ; but, after you have passed the palaces of the Fou-yuen, the Tséan-keun, and the Pou-chin-tze, still proceeding towards the north, you enter the Ki-tcha-kiaï, which offers a most revolting spectacle. This quarter stands on an immense extent of ground, ceded to the Tartars at the time of the conquest of Kuang-ton. The descendants of the persons to whom it was formerly ceded, are still at the present day as barbarous as their forefathers, those nomade soldiers, who lived in tents: They inhabit perfect dens, built of dried mud ; the uneven ground serves as their flooring. These places contain only one room, in which men, women, and children—quite naked and emaciated—eat, sleep, and swarm with vermin, in a state of idleness. Before the entrance hangs a rattan mat. It is neither the modesty of the women, nor

the fear of thieves, which has interposed this veil between these frightful interiors and the indiscreet glances of the passers by, but simply the necessity of a protection against the north wind. The hideous lanes, bordered by these dirty huts, are not paved ; the least shower hollows out the ground and forms stinking puddles, which resemble reservoirs, destined to collect the liquid mud which the rain drives before it."

" All this is, certainly, not very beautiful," I exclaimed. " But are there not fine fountains and broad canals to wash away this filth ? "

" Yes, you would find, at the foot of the northern hills, magnificent basins ; the water which reposes in these natural shells, resembles vapour hanging in the air. The azure sheets of it which flow down from the surface are divided into two branches : one spreads through the city, and the other flows out behind the ramparts. The first disappears quickly in the mud of the street ; the second flees joyously away, bounding beyond the walls, happy not to be soiled by contact with the fetid waters that stagnate before the houses. These are the only springs which the city contains. In nearly all the streets there are wells, and many houses have cisterns to receive the rain water.

" As to the *veins of the city* (the internal canals), they surround its walls and traverse it in all direc-

tions—they are chiefly intended to convey travellers and merchandise ; these heavy-laden waters relieve man from fatigue, and are straightened into canals rather for utility than for ornament. You may see the chief of these conduits ; it is close to the factories, and enters the new city near the gate of Tai-pin-Moun, by a passage which is closed every night, but opened during the day by a ksapèque. This artificial river terminates in a basin before the palace of Wan-chou-Keoun, which—roofing, doors, and ornaments—is entirely yellow, because it belongs to the emperor. There is a tablet there, on which is inscribed the name of our great sovereign, the son of heaven. On every grand fête, all the functionaries come to pay homage to this glorious name, which they contemplate, for a certain time, in a more respectful attitude than they would assume before their master himself. No one has a right to sit down on any article of furniture in this palace. The highest dignitaries have cushions brought, on which they crouch on the floor cross-legged.”

Pan-se-Chen interrupted himself, smiling, a moment ; then added :

“I have given you a description of the city, which ought to satisfy the most eager curiosity ; but I know that Europeans are self-willed, and I fear I have not succeeded in making you abandon your project.”

Without replying directly to this reflection of our friend, I said :

“How happens it that your government, which so anxiously isolates the interior population from all contact with foreigners, allows this wall, which encloses two official cities, to fall into ruin? This barrier, if good care be not taken, will soon cease to exist; a few cannon shots of the barbarians would quickly open a breach that would never be closed.”

“Indeed,” replied Pan, “the stones which form the inside layers have become softer than a ripe blade of corn, and the walls fall to dust. The men of the city Tchin-jin, too, are base and vacillating. But why, at present, incur a useless expense, as we are not at war? Besides, the northern walls are in a very good state, and, according to all rule, that is the point on which we ought to be attacked.”

What was there to reply to such reasons? Nothing!

“I have been told,” I resumed, “that the wall of the two cities has sixteen gates. How are these distributed? Is this number of entrances equally divided along the whole extent of the wall?”

“The ramparts, indeed, have sixteen gates,” said Pan; “but twelve of these are exterior, and four interior; that is to say, the latter form the means of communication between the Tartar and the Chinese

cities : they are inserted in the wall which separates them. The old city, although the wall that surrounds it has four times the extent of that part which incloses the new city, only communicates with the exterior by four gates. They are situated—the first two at the north angle and the north-east angle ; the two others stretch from east to west, and terminate at the extremities of the Street of Benevolent Affection, Hoèi-gai-kiaï, which traverses, as I have already said, the whole length of the Tartar city.

“ As to the Chinese city, it communicates by nine gates with the exterior ; seven are opened in the south wall, which runs along the suburb, to facilitate commercial intercourse ; and two are opened at the east and at the west, opposite each other. The first, the gate of Eternal Repose, is near the Hospital of Foundlings, You-yng-Tang : strangers sometimes visit it. The second, Tai-pin-Moun, is near the factories. A Tartar general is always on duty at the Eternal Repose, Yung-gan-Moun, and a sentinel, pike-in-hand, a conical hat, with red horse hair plumage, on his head, a placard, with large inscriptions on his breast, and boots with beaver soles on his feet, paces day and night before its threshold.”

“ At night, I know, the gates are shut which communicate with the suburbs and the country, but are the others also shut which connect the two official cities ? ”

“Certainly!” exclaimed Pan, surprised at this question.

“Why, then,” said I, “since you have nothing to fear from without, why this excess of precautions? What interest could the people of the Chinese city have in creating disorder in the Tartar city? or why should the inhabitants of the latter disturb the tranquillity of their neighbours?”

“This results,” said our friend, sententiously, “from our political organisation. The prudence of our sovereigns has so ordered matters as to make treasons and seditions impossible.”

“The deuce!” we exclaimed; “if you can give us the recipe without betraying the laws of the state, you will do us great service.”

Pan reflected a few moments, then continued thus:—

“As the new city is at present separated from the old—the Tartar city was formerly divided into four distinct parts independent the one of the other, and surrounded by fortified walls. The object of this regulation was to isolate the functionaries, and to put them under mutual superintendence, as too frequent intercourse might induce them to hatch plots, or at least to relax from the severity which is indispensable in official relations. This system of separation and surveillance is the one which still prevails in the policy of the Empire. The Govern-

ment, for instance, of the two Kuangs is thus organised : The chief authority of the two provinces is the viceroy, who inhabits the Chinese city. All the functionaries are appointed by him, and are bound to execute his orders without hesitation. But each of these superior agents, has, in his own particular sphere, an independence which the authority of the viceroy cannot touch, who himself, in certain circumstances, cannot act, till he has asked the advice and obtained the consent of his inferiors. The second authority is again a functionary of the civil order ; he is the fou-yuen, the vice-governor, who resides in the Tartar city. His power extends only over the province of the Kuang-ton, which he governs on his own personal responsibility ; but in consequence of the solidarity which exists between the several delegates of authority, the viceroy, even in urgent cases, cannot inflict the punishment of death without having obtained the assent of this functionary. The third Cantonal authority is military. The Tartar general is responsible for the safety of the city, and commands a force of 5,000 men. But he cannot exercise them in any strategic manœuvres without having obtained the authorisation of the viceroy. Despite his title of commander-in-chief, the tsean-keoun is not the only ruler who has regiments under his orders ; the viceroy commands 5,000 men, and the vice-governor 2,000. But the former

is obliged to keep his little army at a certain distance from the walled city.

“Now see how the authorities mutually watch each other. In the new city, by the side of the palace of the viceroy, rises the residence of the grand hoppo, whose political importance is much greater than the obscure functions of director of the customs would lead one to suppose. The grand hoppo is usually a man belonging to the household of the Emperor, either an old domestic, or one of those petty relations—parasite branches which spring numerous up from the imperial stock. The devotedness of this functionary is the more absolute as he is so nearly connected with the sovereign ; he is a familiar spy so placed as to observe all the proceedings of the viceroy. In the Tartar city the fou-yuen, who is generally a learned Chinese, having obtained his high position by literary success, is superintended by the Tartar general, who is a soldier, and thus by brutal instinct averse to all which despises force and recognises only intellectual superiority. The antagonism of these two functionaries is still heightened by their difference of race, the one belonging to the conquering, and the other to the subjected nation. Nevertheless, as the spirit of rebellion breaks out more frequently in gross and ignorant natures than among persons of cultivated minds, the real interpreters of the law—the viceroy and the fou-yuen—have under their orders seven

thousand men to oppose, in case of need, to the five thousand soldiers at the disposition of the tséan-keoun.

“The criminal judge is, after the authorities I have just named, the most dreaded power in Canton. He judges alone, but when capital punishment is to be inflicted, he cannot pronounce sentence without the concurrence of the other chiefs of the province. Besides, such a sentence is never executed immediately ; it requires the ratification of the Emperor. It is only in case of a rebellion that the viceroy and the four-yuen can together, being perfectly agreed, cause a criminal to be put to death without referring to Peking.

“We must not believe that the people are without resources against the exactions of the mandarins, errors of justice, &c. ; the most humble inhabitant of the province may always appeal to the viceroy, who twice a month receives all petitions addressed to him.

“You see, then, in China authority is graduated like the creations of nature. In mountainous regions one usually sees a pinnacle which commands the whole country ; by its side are mountains whose elevation descends insensibly, and if the eye of the traveller follows these descents he will shortly see in the plain but insignificant undulations which soon escape perception altogether. Thus it is with the authority of

the son of heaven ; by viceroys, sub-governors, judges and generals, it comes down to the people, where it is manifested only by the presence of inferior agents, sub-prefects and mayors."

"It is true," said I, laughing : "but it appears to me that the charge of these latter must be very light ; they are invested with so small an authority, that their responsibility cannot run any great risks."

"You deceive yourself," replied Pan ; "doubtless they have not to interfere in state affairs ; they are not consulted about treaties of commerce, about declarations of war, and terms of peace ; all that concerns the national unity is confined to the high mandarins. What light could these inhabitants of the country, entirely governed by local influences, bring to the discussion of these questions ? But they are masters at home ; with the old men of the village they form an administrative council, which regulates the rate of taxation, keeps the public roads in repair, supplies granaries of reserved corn, and considers the best means of preventing bad harvests, and preserving social order. These are occupations suited to their intelligence, for which all that is required is probity and good sense."

At this last piece of information I cried out :—

"Thank you, my friend ; I abandon at present my intention of penetrating within the walls of the city, but on one condition—introduce me to a Chinese family !"


"Certainly ! to mine."

This was replying like an, amiable and well educated man in all countries. I stretched out my hand to my dear mandarin, and we each of us returned to our own home. It was in consequence of this conversation, of which I have faithfully transcribed all the details, that I gave up the design of visiting the official city ; my readers need not regret this. The descriptions and appreciations of Pan-se-Chen, are worth more than the accounts of those travellers who have already passed the gate of Chin-se-Moun, when but you know the rest. I should add, that the whole of this conversation was owing to the extreme complaisance of Callery. I have more than once substituted my own name for his in reporting the incidents of this soirée ; but that does not affect, in the slightest degree, the perfect truth of my recital.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EUROPEAN LADY INSIDE CANTON—CHINESE CHARLATANS—A BRIDAL PROCESSION—TOOTH-EXTRACTING POWDER—AN ECCENTRIC VENDER OF CURIOSITIES—CHINESE ARTICLES OF VERTU.

FROM Paris to Canton, from Canton to Rome, to be well received by the shopkeeper, one must have a good deal of money to spend, for a trafficker knows at once how much a man whom he sees for the first time will bring him. This intuition seems especially to belong to a vender of curiosities,—a species of animal between the spaniel and the jackall. Go into his shop, and at a glance he guages your pockets ; he knows what they contain ; if his impression is favourable, it is with joyous barks and bounds that he spreads his rarities before you. He empties his closets, and brings forth from secret drawers the treasures which his avarice has heaped up there. But if, on the contrary, he has divined the emptiness of your purse, the spaniel changes into a Cerberus ; the ugly beast shows his teeth ; he answers only by monosyllables ; and if he does not tell you plainly that his magazine is not a museum, which idlers may visit gratis, he gives you clearly to understand as much. If you were an amateur as knowing as M. Dusommerard or the Duc de Luynes, your science



would find no favour with him. Cerberus never stops snarling till you throw him a honey-cake in the shape of a few pieces of gold ; and, as I had but a very limited provision of these sops, I resolved to shelter myself behind M. de Lagrené in accomplishing my tour through the shops of Canton.

I have already said that the populace of Canton is the most violent, the most stupid, and the most inconsistent in the whole universe ; and I am going to give a proof of this. When the Chinese meet in the American garden, or in the narrow alleys of the factories, any beautiful child of the Saxon race with auburn hair and blue eyes, or any beautiful little boy as rosy as a cupid of Watteau, they crowd around these charming little creatures with benevolent curiosity ; they press them in their arms, and, if permitted, they would cover them with kisses and carry them away. Well, these men, animated with such sentiments towards these beautiful cherubims, nourish the most violent hatred against their parents. They can hardly bear the presence of Europeans in their suburbs ; and if a woman should pass the threshold of the factories, she would probably pay for this imprudence with her life. There is thus hardly an example of any lady from the West having visited the Chinese streets ; the dangerous dispositions of the populace repress the curiosity even of the most fearless.

Notwithstanding these precedents, the Cantonal authorities gave our ambassador the assurance, that, if Madame de Lagrené desired to visit the quarter near the hong, she would be protected from every expression of popular ill-will. This was enough for Madame de Lagrené, whose courage is by no means masculine, and triumphed over the hesitation of the ambassador ; so it was decided that the next day we should visit the shops of Physic Street.

The party who conducted the ambassadress disembarked in the quarter of the hong. On stepping out of her boat, the lady entered a chair, well closed with sliding shutters, and we set off. Issuing from the walls of the American hong, we traversed the place situated between this sort of rampart and the passage of Old China Street, a place of meeting, as I have already said, for loungers, for thieves, and for charlatans. The larger part of the ambassadorial party followed at a distance, that, in case of any accident, which happily did not happen, we might have assistance within reach. On that day, certainly the whole secret police of Canton was on foot. To give Madame de Lagrené time to contemplate through the shutters of her prison the strange scene, like a fair in a field, she was passing through, the coolies had been directed to advance very slowly, and to make, without attracting attention, as little way as possible.

These orders were perfectly executed. Madame de Lagrené was the first lady who could, in all security contemplate the singular assemblage which, for twelve hours of the day, is to be seen at this place. It is there where are really throned the eternal heroes of the plebs! those who in all times have best comprehended its gross instincts, its incurable ignorance, its stupid credulity—fortune-tellers, charlatans, and singers of doleful ditties. It is on encountering, in every part of the world, these *exploiters* of the imbecility of the masses, that one becomes convinced of the unity of the human race, and feels one's heart affected by immense commiseration and sadness.

The necromancers of Canton do not, like the ancient enchanters, wear a pointed hat studded with stars and crescents; they are not even clothed with the long black gown, and they resemble only the classic sorcerers of the West by the spectacles which magisterially bestride their noses. They have even subjected this cabalistic complement of their costume to a certain improvement. Their supposed eyeglasses are often of smoked quartz, which gives to their physiognomy a very sinister aspect. By the side of these diviners are exhibited the pretended instruments of their profession—dirty books, black banners riven by thunder, mathematical instruments, pincers, a writing desk, and paper to make calculations, and write their sentences. It is round

these strange persons that the crowd presses ; while they speak, a circle of wondering gabies surrounds them. There you may see coolies with their noses in the air, others with their mouths open, and even the old burgher of grave deportment, listening with avidity to the sentences they utter, and never forgetting to pay the astrologer a tribute more welcome than that of their admiration.

These venders of orvietan and miraculous balm have more respect for popular stupidity than European charlatans. They have recourse to none of our common tricks to assemble auditors ; their proceedings are more scientific. It is usually a cock with the leg of a duck, that draws the idle together. The quack doctor holds in one hand a jar or rather a stick of his unguent, and explains to the spectators that it was with this marvellous preparation that he grafted the foot of the duck on the cock. Certainly in the midst of these noodles there are many who know that the cock's leg is merely glued to the membranous skin of a duck's foot ; but this does not hinder them from buying the miraculous drug, whilst the majority believe fully in the truth of the gross imposture.

The public of the ambulant singers is not less numerous than that of their rivals ; but its preference for actors testifies in favour of its intelligence: The old ballads the singer chaunts may have no

great value, but at least in placing in the hands of the bard his modest offering, the giver fixes himself his price on the pleasure he has enjoyed. I know not what the poetic merit may be of the works which in Chinese literature occupy the place which the complaint of *Henriette* and of the *Beau Dunois* occupy in ours ; but I can affirm that the airs to which these productions of the popular muse are set, are charming. From a grave and slow rhythm there bursts at intervals startling notes, like flashes of lightning traversing brilliant summer nights. These harmonies resemble those which Alpine shepherds improvise in their mountains. The inhabitants of mute and solitary plains find them wild and monotonous, for they do not recollect that in their native country these simple melodies are accompanied by the sonorous voice of hurricanes and the noise of torrents.

In the midst of this motionless crowd of *dilettanti*, of benevolent and interested spectators and of mere idlers, barbers shave, restaurateurs sell soups, bird-catchers display in their cages their singing and fluttering pupils ; huntsmen, the gun over their shoulders, and their victims strung together on a long cord, make their offers to passengers, and thieves carry on their trade with ardour and success.

Whilst Madame de Lagrené, shut up in her chair, contemplates these various scenes, seeing with-

out being seen, an unexpected incident happened to complete the spectacle. Her chair crossed the procession of a new bride. Musicians blowing their hautboys marched at its head. Then came men carrying flags of all colours floating in the air : to these succeeded others bearing parasols of red silk, of the form of a sieve, and ornamented all round with long pendant fringes. Three gilded chairs, decorated with flowers and ribbons, followed the parasol bearers. On this sort of portable altar were exposed to the admiration of gastronomers, whole roast pigs, succulent geese, and cakes of all kinds. A few women in sedan chairs preceded the palanquin of the new bride, who was, as it were, enclosed in a sheath of satin, of the most brilliant colours. At last, children in their holiday clothes, and a few pedestrians, closed the procession.

This encounter was one of the odd incidents of our expedition. Madame de Lagrené and this young girl, meeting without seeing each other, must each of them retain an ineffaceable impression of this day. The young Chinese cannot forget the moment when she renounced her name to take that of a family till then unknown to her ; and in the midst of her souvenirs of travel, Madame de Lagrené will preserve that of the emotion she must have experienced when for the first time she set her foot on a land

veritably Chinese; and extremely hostile to the ladies of the West.

I traversed afterwards this motley, confused scene in company with an Englishman, who had inhabited Canton for many years. On our road we met with an individual who was remarkable only for his miserable accoutrements. Although the cold wind of autumn had forced his compatriots to pile on their shoulders a good part of their wardrobe, he was shivering in a cham and pantaloons of gray cloth, both dirty and torn. He dragged on his feet worn-out sandals, and his head was covered with a large straw hat. He carried behind his back, suspended to a leathern thong, an old wooden case, the lid of which was hardly held in its place by hinges which had lost half their nails.

"Do you know who that man is?" said the Englishman, pointing to the unfortunate.

"Without doubt he is a gain little," replied I; "and I expect every moment to hear him cry knives, scissors, razors, set or ground."

"You have not hit it," said the Englishman. "This man enjoys at Canton a certain celebrity; he is the possessor of a marvellous secret."

"Most certainly, he does n't possess that of making gold," replied I, laughing.

"That may or may not be," replied the son of Albion phlegmatically; "one may want money even in making gold."

"The deuce ! does he really possess the philosopher's stone ? " I asked, with ironical earnestness.

The Englishman stopped, looked at me for a moment, and then slowly, emphasising every word, gave me the following explanation :—

" By means of a powder, of which he alone knows the composition, this man draws teeth without pain, without the aid of any kind of instrument ; in other words, the teeth on which he puts his powder detach themselves and fall out after a certain time."

I regarded my informant with an air which was meant to say, " My dear fellow, you are mad, or you are quizzing me." But he struck his forehead, and exclaimed :—

" Ah, pardon me ! I had forgotten that you are a doctor ; and naturally you are on this point as incredulous as your colleagues."

" Say, my dear sir, as the most incredulous of my colleagues," added I.

" Nevertheless, testimony is something even in your opinion, and if hundreds of persons assure you that they have seen the phenomenon of which I speak ? "

" Let us first see what is this testimony. Have you, my dear sir, passed under the hand of that fellow ? "

" God forbid ! " cried the Englishman, showing me two rows of teeth as white as those of a shark. " But my cousin John told me."

"Oh, it little matters what cousin John has told you," interrupted I; "although I hold him to be a very truthful lad, I will believe my own testimony rather than his, and there is a very simple mode of convincing me. Call the man, and tell him that I wish him to extract one of my finest molars."

"What folly! You expose yourself to the loss of a tooth to put to the proof a fact which everyone affirms."

"Don't be uneasy. Never will a loss be better paid than that, if the experiment succeeds. I shall then buy this secret of the man, who does not seem to be in a position to refuse my brilliant offers; I shall sell it again for many millions to the carious jaws of my dear country. But call this quack, otherwise we shall lose him in the crowd."

The cousin of Master John told the Chinese that I desired him to ease me of a molar. The rival of Fattet bade me open my mouth, and declared that on that very evening I should have in my hand the tooth which I proposed to sacrifice. He took from his box a little packet, which he sold me for thirty sapecs. He directed me to put a few particles of the contents in contact with the tooth I wished to lose, and to renew the application every hour three times consecutively. He then asked for my address, that he might visit me the next day, and took his leave.

As soon as the man was gone, I examined the

medicament. It was simply powdered camphor, in the midst of which one might detect some seeds imperfectly pounded. I separated a few of these vegetable particles, and ascertained, by their form and their taste, that they were remnants of divers aromatic herbs related to the angelica and fennel. I followed the prescription, which the dentist had given me, with perseverance and very conscientiously ; he, on his part, came to see me in our house at Thè-ki-Han, precisely as he had promised. The moment he entered, I opened my mouth ; he thrust in his dirty fingers. I allowed him to do so, so great at that time was my devotion to science. He seized with his thumb and forefinger the second upper molar tooth, on which I had imprudently allowed him to make his experiments. He gave my head a shake, sufficient to dislocate the vertebræ of the neck, but the tooth braved all his efforts, and remained set in the gum as firmly as ever.

The operator then explained at length, and with much pomposity, to my interpreter, who, with a wise air, approved by gestures all he said, that the tooth was much loosened and ready to fall of itself, but that it would be better to aid it by means of a little instrument which he had in his case. And the monster advanced towards me armed with a pair of enormous pincers, and with a formidable key, which must certainly have been manufactured in the days of the first Emperors of China. The instrument was hideous

to behold ; the veterinary surgeons of the King of Siam's elephants must certainly use a more humane implement for their gigantic patients. It is needless to say that I showed the dirty quack to the door with as little politeness as possible ; and I now fully appreciated the secret which the Chinese possess of detaching teeth from their gums without pain, without any instrument either of iron or steel, and simply by means of an innocent powder. In spite of this conclusive experiment, I have heard (a thousand times since) the same story ; and my Englishman himself, when I informed him of the result of my adventure, repeated :

“Nevertheless, my cousin John—”

I am convinced that the intelligence of man is limited ; but on the other hand, I believe his credulity and stupidity to be infinite.

After having crossed the Place of the Factories, and old China Street, we went directly into Physic Street, to a vender of curiosities, who was then the Monbro of Canton. This old man, whom the Europeans have surnamed Talkee-True, because the words “*I tell the truth*” are always in his mouth whenever he wishes to convince his customers of his commercial honesty, is one of those originals who denote a very advanced state of civilisation. Eccentric characters are the product of a highly developed intellectual society ; barbarians and savages seem all cut out

from the same pattern. I have never myself known the real name of this merchant ; but if you ever go to Canton, and wish to visit his shop, ask, in the quarter of the factories, of the first coolie or of the first European you may meet, for the house of Talkee-True, and certainly he will take you there.

The portrait of this celebrated merchant has often been sketched, but, oddly enough, those who have undertaken to paint him have merely produced a caricature without caring at all about the resemblance. To a great number of individuals a Chinese is simply a very ridiculous animal, and therefore, according to them, every grotesque painting must resemble him. Thus Talkee-True's shop is represented as a closet in an old house full of old rattletraps, and the master himself as an old mummy just escaped from his camphor winding-cloths, clad in old rags of the time of Ming, and wearing a false queue which he has picked out from a heap of bric-brac rubbish. Unfortunately, this picture has not even the merit of this sort of productions ; it is not even an exaggeration of the truth.

The house of Talkee-True is one of the finest, and his shop is certainly the most elegant one in Physic Street ; his curiosities, arranged in perfect order, are, which is rare in China, protected by glasses from the dust and from indiscreet hands. But it is true that he is old and ugly ; he is seventy years of age at

least, and is thin and small ; his face, stained over with dingy tints, is something like an old kid glove ; he has little wrinkled eyes, which his spectacles do not hide ; and his queue is too small, too white, and too worn to be false. In winter he is enveloped in a handsome furred robe, respected by the mites, and against which time has as yet waged no war ; in summer he wears nankeen pantaloons and a long blue tunic. The language which he speaks with the barbarians is the Anglo-Chino-Portuguese patois, the Frank tongue of the extreme East, which these brave children of the Celestial Empire have made as soft as the Creole patois of Bourbon.

The physiognomy and the manners of the venerable old man are benevolent, almost timid ; he plunders you so delicately of all your money, that when one leaves him completely cleaned out, one feels still under an obligation to him. Talkee-True is at the same time a merchant and an artist, and his antiquarian taste is continually struggling with his commercial avidity. When he sells anything, he contends with the buyer and with himself ; up to the last moment, he hesitates between the dollars and the gem of art he is about to part with. He lives only in the past. A bronze figure three hundred years old is to him a modern object ; his mind is perpetually ascending the stream of time ; he hardly inquires about the present, which he considers bad, and cares little about the

future, which according to him will be worse. He thus appeals constantly to ancient customs and antique probity. His ideal would be to wake one morning in the midst of the Celestial Empire of twenty ages since.

As for me, having found between the Chinese civilisation and our own more resemblances than differences, I have also learned that certain Parisian individualities have their counterparts at the other extremity of the universe. Talkee-True, at six thousand leagues distance, is the reflection of a grocer who is well-known by his quaint antique whims and opinions, as celebrated in the comic journals. The shop in Physic Street, excepting the nature of the merchandise, is the "Provençal bazaar" of Canton. Nothing is wanting—neither good commercial maxims, nor moral inscriptions, nor wise saws in verse; but as diversity is one of the laws which rule our world, resemblances never reach to identity. Talkee-True is short and thin; the Parisian grocer is tall and fat.

Talkee-True receives daily at his house all the men of letters in Canton who are devoted to the study of antique curiosities, and all the barbarous collectors of Chinese antiquities. The arrival at this celebrated shop of a palanquin borne by four coolies, the aristocratic equipage of the Kingdom of Flowers, is an event so frequent that the old merchant hardly notices it. But once, when he saw a long file of sedan chairs

stop at the threshold of his door, and a great lady from the West descend from one of those elegant chairs, he ran forward as quickly as his old limbs would permit him. He hastened to lead Madame de Lagrené into his back shop, so as to withdraw her from the eager curiosity of the crowd, and he expressed his astonishment by all sorts of exclamations.

I am convinced that the visit of Madame de Lagrené to his shop marks the date of a new era to Talkee-True. Indeed, the traditional annals of his house had never related a like event. Preserves of all sorts were served on an old Japan tray, the bottom of which was, as it were, paved with little squares of painted porcelain. Plates of different forms, adapted to each other like a Chinese puzzle, were filled each with a different kind of fruit. In the middle of the tray was a two-pronged fork with an ebony handle, that every one might help himself without putting his hand in the dish. After the preserves, we were offered tea in cups as light as egg-shells. Having done honour to the hospitality of old Talkee-True, we cast a glance over his museum : we visited first his principal shop, then the back shop, and afterwards the upper storey.

The curiosities of Talkee-True's warehouse may be classed thus : precious stones, bronzes, pictures on silk, old coins, bamboos, rhinoceros-horns, and porce-

lain. At the risk of fatiguing the reader by a too minute examination, I will endeavour to give an idea of the graceful fantasies and charming inutilities in which Chinese artists have from time immemorial luxuriated. This sketch will give a better idea of the scope of the civilisation of the Celestial Empire than any other details. In my opinion, the value which the enlightened classes of a nation attach to luxurious delicacies, to costly rarities, fixes the hierarchic rank they should occupy in the world. The rajahs of Malasia and the pachas of the Ottoman Empire possess, it is true, in the shape of sparkling gems and magnificent tissues, objects of great price; but they are incapable of appreciating the thousand little nothings which Westerns and the Chinese will pay for with their weight in gold.

The children of the Empire of Flowers are very profuse, in their poetry, with cascades of precious stones, rivulets of pearls, and rivers of metallic waters. In this literature, derived from the vocabulary of a jeweller, there is a mineral, the name of which is constantly recurring, both in the essays of the pupil and the works of the master. The name of this stone is, with the Chinese, "yiu;" we barbarians call it "jade;" and the learned of the West, more barbarous still, designate it by the name of double silicate, of alum, and magnesia. In all ages, the men of letters of the Academy of the

Hau-lin have decreed that the yiu is the precious stone *par excellence*, and that its semi-transparent appearance, its tints, which change from milky white to deep green—its hardness, greater than that of rock crystal, may furnish matter for comparisons without end. Thus the words which fall from the mouth of an emperor, or simply from a minister, are to the poets fragments of yiu polished with corundum; the tender avowal of a young girl is soft and pure as yiu; and it is moreover understood that the discourse of a man of science has certain qualities belonging to this stone—its heaviness, perhaps. We may conceive that a mineral celebrated in song for at least 4,000 years, with a perseverance that would be very fatiguing to any people but the Chinese, must be very generally appreciated, and that artists should very often make use of it. There exist, indeed, an immense number of jade jewels. The lapidaries, by means of the corundum, give to the silicate a thousand different forms, so that the most humble coolie, as well as the Emperor, possess objects formed of this material. The yiu is in China what gold is in Europe—it has not fallen in esteem by becoming popular; and though very often the bracelet of a waterman is of this precious stone, the wife of the mandarin and the mandarin himself does not disdain to wear a similar one.

The shop of Talkee-True contains all sorts of little trinkets of this stone—snuff-boxes, rings, pins, cups,

statuettes, and you-i. This last object, which is the emblem of friendship, is a sort of sceptre, about a foot long. The you-i represents in reality a lotus-leaf, whose stem is covered with allegorical figures or characters. One may reasonably suppose that it is not only the emblem of friendship, but also a symbol of authority. In all family pictures, the person who exercises power holds in his hand this species of sceptre. It is perhaps a souvenir of the pastoral staff of the first rulers of peoples—an evident proof that all civilisations have commenced with a moderate use of the ferule! Happy those who in their decline do not fall again under the instrument which has chastised them in their youth; for that which merely bruises the skin of the child, breaks the bones of the old man. There are you-i's in lacquer, in porcelain, and even in bronze. Callery speaks of one of these latter, inestimably valuable on account of its antiquity. The difficulty experienced in cutting the yui stones gives great value to statuettes of this material. But the Chinese sculptors only carefully finish pieces of large dimensions, representing mythological personages—the Virgin Kouanin in her lotus, or the god of riches and of pleasure with his hand on his abdomen. As to the figures, flowers, and insects which the Chinese ladies suspend from the handles of their fans, they are particular in giving them graceful forms—graceful according to *their* taste, but nothing more. The

Chinese tobacco-vases, though very elegant, do not resemble those charming little boxes of agate and cornelian set with gold, in which our great-grandmothers carried the perfumed snuff of Spain. They are simply little flasks of quartz, like our smelling-bottles. They are round or flat; their aperture is very narrow; to the cork is affixed an ivory spoon, to get at the scented dust. The Chinese take snuff like the peasants of Brittany and Provence: they place it first on the back of the hand, and then sniff it up with their nostrils. There are snuff-flasks of a very high price: their value depends upon the rarity of the stone of which they are made, and upon the time employed by the artist in fabricating them. I have seen a flask of yellow yiu which represented a cedar with five branches, commonly called the "Hand of Buddha." The sacred fruit was imitated with marvellous truth. Profiting by the sinuosities of the stone, the artists cleverly improvise all sorts of subjects, which they cut in relief, after the manner of cameos. Talkee-True had in his museum one of these vases, which excited our admiration; its surface was covered with insects, half-withered leaves, and fragments of plants, the execution of which—full of nature as it was—had been directed merely by the course of the coloured veins in the agate. Of course, the snuff-vases which the common people use, are not of hard stone: they are generally of coloured glass or

of porcelain, and they assume the same form, and often the same colours and the same designs, as those of a high price. The same thing occurs in France, where the vulgar snuff-box of *papier mach*, represents certain historic incidents, and presumes to contend with delicate productions, and the most precious materials. In the middle of an official dinner, Ki-In, in a moment of amicable expansion, offered M. de Lagrené the flask he was using on that day. It was of rock-crystal, marked with a character which expressed the name of the Imperial commissary's child—a charming diminutive which maternal tenderness had invented for him.

Nearly all the Chinese of any distinction wear a ring on the thumb of the right hand, which embraces the whole of the second joint. No mandarin in an official visit can dispense with this ornament. It is a Tartar fashion which the conquerors have imposed on the dignitaries of the Empire, as they have imposed the long queue on the rest of the nation. Pan-se-Chen, as a skilful courtier, often showed one of those agate rings called pan-chi, which the viceroy of the two Kuangs had given him. There was but one thing remarkable about it: it was formed of three concentric circles of equal width and different colours; the first was red; the second, white; the third, black. These gems were arranged with such precision, that a practised hand could not

have drawn them better. Toun, the obtuse Tartar soldier, had a pan-che of rock crystal, as transparent as the button of his cap. Clasps of quartz stones are also made, which would be very successful in France, if the ladies of our nation had the bad taste to dress themselves like the Roman women of the first empire. The Emperor of China, who has taken upon himself the puerile task of regulating his officers' costumes, has decided upon the shape of the buckles of their belts. That of Ki-In was of jade, on account of his rank as viceroy ; but none of the mandarins who assisted him had a right to wear a similar one.

The Chinese not only make you-i, snuff-boxes, bracelets, clasps, and rings with the hard coloured stones, but they also make use of them to execute pictures, which amongst us belong exclusively to painting. By means of fragments of jade, quartz, lapis-lazuli, and cornelian, they form landscapes, grand compositions, in which the men, houses, plants, and mountains are of stone ; they are mosaics in relief, which render the lapidary style of their poets quite palpable. These singular pictures are excessively dear ; and without exactly knowing why, they are liked and much sought after. Certainly these designs have no truth in them, as regards colour and arrangement, but if I may venture to give utterance to such heresy, I should say that it is

in this their merit lies : they cause the impossible to be appreciable to the senses, and this realisation of the Chinese ideal is not without its charms. There are human figures with faces carved in yellow nephritis, clothed in turquoises or pieces of jet, there are women without feet, cut in transparent amber, who resemble the bulbs at the ends of bulrushes. These fantastical creatures live in jasper houses built upon mountains of granite ; the parks of these châteaux are shaded by trees with lapis-lazuli trunks and branches, and crystal leaves and fruit. The sky, earth, and sea correspond with these strange compositions ; the clouds are of jade, and cast green reflections ; heavy silver junks sail upon the sea, the waves of which are golden, and the ground is strewn with mineral spangles, which reflect the solar rays in brilliant sparks. Since my return from China, every time I have looked at the moon through a telescope, I have fancied that the stone landscapes of the Celestial Empire were a faithful representation of the inhabited parts of that planet.

Articles in bronze abound in Talkee-True's shop : they are in general sacred vases, incense burners, and idols, which Chinese indifference has abstracted from the hereditary chapels of their homes, or which some bonzes—they are quite capable of it—have removed from some renowned pagoda. Although there are many places in China where antiquities are manufactured,

those in the shop in Physic Street were almost all authentic. The old broker, in his character as retired connoisseur, took pleasure in revealing the secrets of the trade to M. de Legrené, and in pointing out to him the means by which an antique may be distinguished from a modern imitation. As these details did not interest me in the least, I gave my whole attention to the objects which presented themselves to our curiosity, to whatever age they might have belonged. Generally speaking, the Buddhist gods had that placid expression which becomes revealers, who teach that man must, through infinite transmigrations, continue the annihilation of his own personality ; and the Houanins seated in the calyx of the lotus, the symbol of festivity, eloquently represented the saints of that material religion—their faces, devoid of expression, seemed to say that woman in this life is but the passive agent of eternal regeneration. According to the Llamam doctrine, matter alone is regenerated, and does not die, and the intervention of an immaterial agent is not essential to eternal procreation. However, notwithstanding the religious intention which had inspired these sacred images, they were of much less value as works of art than the perfume pans and incense burners. These vases—of all shapes and sizes, round, oblong, and square—as humble as a bird's nest, and as magnificent as a funeral urn—were for the most part very remarkable pieces of workmanship.

The leaves which formed festoons on the exterior, the curling vine, and the bamboo stalks which formed the handles, seemed to have been cast in lava which had become solidified on a luxuriant vegetation, of which it had preserved the impression after having reduced it to ashes. The Chinese bronzes deserve a special historian to give us the means of determining their ages, and to teach us how to distinguish the works of the masters from those of their clever imitators. It is probable that this gap will be filled, as Callery is engaged upon a work which will treat particularly of the arts in China.

The artistic genius of the Chinese is particularly evinced in those cases where constant application and great manual precision are necessary ; difficulty overcome being, in the eyes of the children of the Land of Flowers, the principal merit in a work of art. A poor workman, who gains but a few francs a day, shut up in a garret or in the dark corner of a shop, is absorbed in his work, and early accustoms himself unhesitatingly to improvise subjects, which one of our most skilful artists would hardly dare to attempt. The consequence of this habitual boldness is, that a metal worker or wood engraver works with great ease. On a silver cup, between two knots on a bamboo stick, on the uneven horns of stags or oxen, they carve groups of people, animals, fruits, plants, and landscapes, the designs for which originally ex-

isted only in their imagination. At Talkee-True's we admired a great many of these carvings, and particularly about twenty rhinoceros' tusks, which were beautifully cut. These master-pieces by unknown hands, would have made our renowned artists jealous; the latter would certainly have greatly admired the original conception of the subject—the execution and the clearness of the engraving. One of these remarkable carvings was, I think, obtained by M. de Lagrené for fifty piastres; but had he paid its weight in gold it would not have been dear. It represents a fragile plant, the slender branches of which, perfectly separate from one another, bear delicate leaves, on which insects are crawling, and moths, with gauze-like wings, are sporting. In the midst of the interlaced stalks hangs a cup, which by its weight alone bends down the delicate branches to which it is fastened. This magnificent work is more than a foot long; it rests on an ebony stand, which is carved with rare delicacy.

That day Talkee-True, whom the ambassador's purchases had probably put into a good humour, was gracious enough to give me, for the small sum of three piastres, a little cup made from the tusk of a rhinoceros, which is nevertheless a master-piece, in my opinion. This little vase is in the shape of a lotus leaf. On its foliaceous disks, bitten by insects, aquatic worms are crawling, and a jigger, clinging to

the edge, the lower part of its body fastened to the exterior, is trying to drink out of the empty cup. Tantalus, in his eternal bath, doubtless has the same piteous expression as my thirsty and disappointed jigger. This little composition did not cost the artist much labour : it is engraved very slightly in relief, but the effect is strikingly truthful. A hundred times have I seen this poor lotus leaf torn from its stalk, its edges eaten away, floating on the rivers of India ; I recognise these aquatic worms—these nereïds with their flexible waists ; and this flat-bodied jigger, endeavouring to get to the edge of the cup again, is certainly that silent guest in the houses of Malacca and Singapore, who seems to be glued to the ceiling of the apartments by some viscine liquid. Every time I examine this little artistic gem, I call to mind a popular belief among the Malays : they say, that when the jigger falls upon the naked flesh of a man, it somehow buries itself in the skin, and nothing in the world, not even the death of one of the subjects, can separate them.

Formerly the tusks of the rhinoceros were only used for one purpose : cups were made of them, out of which the nobles drank. It was because of the marvellous properties attributed to this horny substance, that the high functionaries of the Celestial Empire adopted these utensils for their libations. A strange thing, which shows how weak and prone

to error our nature is. It would seem that erroneous belief and foolish prejudices enjoy the privilege of universality in this world ! Thus, the absurd opinion, which in China assigns valuable properties to cups of rhinoceros' tusk, exists also in Abyssinia and among the kings who govern the nations on the shores of the Nile. I will relate a conversation on this subject which I had on my last journey to Egypt with one of my best friends, Colonel Arnaud, the superintendent of the fortifications of Damietta, who went up the White Nile nearly to its source, and explored a hundred leagues farther than any one else. When I took leave of this learned man, he searched in a tortoiseshell, and drew out something wrapped in a silk bag, doubtless embroidered in a Stamboul harem, and presented it to me, saying, in the most solemn manner, "Here, my friend, examine the treasure I give you ; I have waited till the moment of your departure to deprive myself, for your sake, of the most precious thing I possess in the world."

I took what Arnaud offered me, and drew it cautiously from its bright wrapper, but I was disappointed on finding in the charming little bag a kind of bowl,—a nasty little wooden cup,—brown streaked with white, which seemed to have been used for a century to quench the thirst of some wretched fellah family ; the case was worth a hundred times as much as its contents. I turned it over every way, hoping

to find something which might justify the many thanks which I considered it necessary to address to my friend ; but seeing nothing—positively nothing—remarkable in it, I pretended to believe that it was an antiquity, and I exclaimed, endeavouring to give my exclamation a very decided expression of enthusiasm, “ You were right in calling that a treasure ! It is, I am sure, the cup which the cynic threw away, when he saw the thenian boy drinking from the hollow of his hand ! ” . . .

“ Stop ! ” interrupted Arnaud almost angrily, “ this is worth a hundred times as much as Diogenes’ cup ! It is enchanted. I only give it away because you are returning to France. If, unfortunately, in that country of political metamorphoses, you should be made king, you may laugh in your sleeve at any schemes of your direct heirs, if they should chance to wish to raise you to the rank of an immortal being too abruptly.” . . .

“ But you,” I interrupted in my turn, “ you, my friend, are exposed to the same dangers. In this barbarous country, it is more easy than in France to acquire supreme rank. Keep, then, the talisman.”

“ I expected this refusal from your delicacy,” said Arnaud ; “ but re-assure yourself : I have twice refused the crown ; and if I should one day wish to reign, I should just go to one of my neighbours, a friend of mine, who is a king not six hundred

leagues from here, and ask him for a cup like the one I have just sacrificed. This worthy potentate breakfasts every morning on the brain of rhinoceros for such is his good pleasure."

"Ah, then, this is a cup made from a rhinoceros' tusk?" cried I.

"Certainly; and if a poisonous liquid be poured into it, were it as limpid as the water which flows from the glaciers of the Alps, it would instantly be troubled; at least this is what was told me by a negro monarch, who received me hospitably in his royal baoba. He had the cup I offer you placed before me to express that I might eat and drink in his house without apprehension."

"My dear friend," I replied, "I know that old story, and Talkee-True of Canton, who is neither king, nor emperor, nor even minister, related it to me with the habitual prolixity of an old broker. But in China the subject of such tales is ornamented sculpture, carefully executed, in order to induce incredulous purchasers to pay dearly for the treasure. On the shores of the White Nile, I see that the story is served up to travellers denuded of all artifice. This does credit to the simplicity of the inhabitants."

"Your Chinese are horrible sceptics," cried Arnaud; "they gild the idol in which they no longer believe, in order to insure admirers for want of worshippers. If you share their incredulity, at

least keep my cup as a proof of the simple belief of these poor tawny people, who sell their children for a bottle of arrack, and in remembrance of me place the earthen cup of faith opposite the golden cup of incredulity."

Thus I possess two cups of rhinoceros' tusks, without, however, considering myself safe from the mortal attacks of badly tinned saucepans. Speaking of saucepans, I ought to mention an industrial process which the Chinese employ in art, and which I think will only be usefully applied when it is exclusively consecrated to kitchen utensils—I mean enamelled copper. They thus make thousands of fancy objects which are very ugly, and are intended to rival the same things made in China. The corners of Talkee-True's shop were crowded with immense vases, bowls, water jugs, and boxes tolerably well-shaped ; but it was necessary to see them at a distance in order to attribute to them any artistic merit. These were the large enamelled copper things which a few frantic admirers of every thing which comes from the Celestial Empire have praised so highly. As a rule, these things are badly painted ; the colours are false, and the surface indented and irregular. The two first faults result from the artists in enamel being much less expert than the workers in porcelain, owing to the difficulty of pouring the enamel smoothly on to the copper vase. It is well

known that mineral substances of the same nature, reduced to a paste by means of a liquid, have a tendency to settle in lumps on the same spot before they have been fixed by baking. This is caused either by the attractive properties of the atoms, or simply by their obeying the laws of gravitation ; and the Chinese have not found a way of preventing this. We paid but little attention to this coarse enamel. We un-animously agreed that this art, almost peculiar to the workmen of the Celestial Empire, will first be usefully applied when it replaces tin in our kitchen utensils. This mineral layer, interposed between the copper and the food, would at least guarantee our intestines from the fatal verdigris, which is guilty of sporadic cholera oftener than we think. Yet it seems that formerly, in China, the enamellers were real artists. All Paris has admired the antique vases which M. de Montigny, the consul at Shanghai, brought back from his travels ; but like many other things in this world, on becoming popular and mixed up with the coarse habits of life, enamelled copper has lost its delicacy and distinction.

I will not detain my readers any longer at old Talkee-True's. Further on, I will make them acquainted with other artistic and industrial curiosities in the Empire of Flowers, but I shall communicate to them these wonders of Chinese art gradually, as I discovered them myself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WATER CITY—THE STREETS OF TANKAS—THE FISHERMENS' STREET—MOVEABLE HOUSES—"NOT AT HOME" IN CANTON.

WE will now leave *terra firma*, and in the tanka of the beautiful A-moun go through the floating-town, and the agitated streets of which the Tchou-kiang nurses incessantly the innumerable inhabitants.

Our boatwoman, seated in the front of the vessel, handled the light oars with much skill ; A-fay, her little sister, who stood a little in the rear, held the rudder, whilst Bandot and myself, lying down beneath the covering of bamboos, and eager to see everything, left to our charming crew the care of conducting us according to the caprice of their fancy. The floating-town of Canton is, to all the Europeans who visit the Celestial Empire, the object of an exclusive predilection ; for them China, the real China, the fantastic China of our screens, fans, and lacquer work, is all on the river which balances on its overhanging surface, &c., a population more numerous than that of Marseilles, Naples, Vienna, or Turin.

The sight of this marvellous city produced a magic effect upon me as I visited the populous bed

of the Tchou-kiang. I was filled with a genuine enthusiasm, and now that I go over my recollections, I feel that the impression was a just one ; that like most things that we meet with in the world, the city of waters ought to be studied silently, in order to comprehend its strange grandeur. There are certain beauties which can only be discovered by reflection. When the traveller sits down for the first time at the foot of the great pyramid of Giseh, he experiences no more emotion than a Parisian at the foot of Montmartre. This Cyclopean pile says nothing to his imagination, but if he walks round the base, if he climbs up the stone steps, in order to reach the summit, he then begins to realise what human efforts such a labour has necessitated, and he is struck with wonder. As the astonishing monument assumes colossal proportions in his eyes, the spectator somehow multiplies the mass by the number of arms which have erected it, and he experiences a genuine admiration for the work whose greatness reveals in so striking a manner what men are capable of producing by the union of their efforts.

The mind goes through an analogous operation before the floating-city of Canton. The first feeling which is experienced at the sight of this plain cut into long lines, of this immense harbour, as populous as our largest cities, is one of stupefaction ; but when we descend to the slightest details of the pri-

vate life of its inhabitants, living by themselves in the midst of its waters ; when we see that this town, without its fellow in the world, is, like all the great centres of population, a microcosm in itself, in which nothing is absent that tends to the satisfaction of human wants, we become enthusiastic about the industrious people, who have thus contrived to appropriate the agitated bed of a river to all the exigencies of our nature.

The town of boats occupies a space of several leagues of the Tchou-kiang ; it is divided into quarters like London and Paris, and like our great cities has its commercial streets, and its fashionable districts. The suburbs—that is to say, the part of the river which is inhabited by the lowest class—are composed of narrow, winding streets, all very much alike. They consist of lines of tankas, with their coverings of bamboo, moored sideways, and presenting all the appearance of the vessels I have described elsewhere in speaking of Macao. During the day, you never see a man in these boats ; the women and children alone remain in the wretched dwelling, while the father is engaged up the river loading the vessels of the barbarians, or disembarking the merchandise contained in the junks which furnish Canton with its enormous supplies.

The fishermen's street adjoins the quarter inhabited by these laborious classes ; their habitations are more vast than those of the poor carriers, and

there is much more animation in the place. As soon as they return from fishing, anchor has scarcely been cast when the children with naked feet run along the shore ; they pass from one boat to another, to stretch out the nets. The men sitting down upon the ground examine the nets, mend the holes made in the preceding expedition, and the women at the back of the little house, prepare the family dinner on a portable stove made of plaster. The fishermen in this amphibious society represent the horticulturists and gardeners who supply large towns. Every morning they plough the inexhaustible plains of the ocean, and furnish the market with the principal object of consumption. The fishermen's street has certainly the most varied aspect of any in the universe. When the weather is fine, each habitation becomes detached from the one next it, and this part of the floating city is sometimes absent for days together. Then, when the fishing is over, the rising tide brings back the travelling abode to its starting place, and the two rows of houses resume their place in the floating city. For the rest, on this liquid soil the appearance of the streets changes every moment. A movement of the tide, a gust of wind, a sudden decrease in the pressure of the atmosphere, and the position of the town is completely changed. For instance, at the approach of a tempest the large vessels turn round, and present to the wind the least assailable portion

of their hull. The little boats gather together, and place themselves under the shelter of the large ones; and these changes are sufficient to render a quarter unrecognizable even to a person who has passed through it only an instant before.

There are, however, a few rows of houses which always preserve their habitual physiognomy. These belong to merchants, private persons, and sometimes to public institutions. These peaceful habitations, which could never set sail, and on board of which it would be very difficult to make use of oars, seldom change their position. They are real houses, with only one side to the water, and placed on the hull of a vessel. The entrance is at the back, if there can be said to be a back. It is left wide open so as to let the air circulate freely, and the rooms have windows furnished with nankeen blinds. The pediment of the outer door is adorned with sculpture and with large characters written on red paper or cut in relief. These inscriptions generally signify happiness, prosperity, longevity. The Chinese, who are naturally not very mystical, do not care for much beyond the happiness of this world. These trading districts, with their floating habitations painted all kinds of colours, and adorned in artistic style, have really all the appearance of Chinese streets on dry land. The illusion would indeed be complete were it not for the fact that you proceed through these streets in a boat, when you

may see the largest of these edifices agitated by the current and the rise and fall of the waves. Here, however, as in Physic Street, there are shops of all kinds and trades of every nature. In the city of Tchou-kiang I have seen not only carpenters' and tailors' shops, but druggists' laboratories, ready-made clothing warehouses, fortune-tellers, and professional letter-writers' stalls, and even a pawnbroker's establishment.

These banks of misery and vice are not directed in China by philanthropic societies; they are entrusted to private speculators, who carry on their trade under the superintendence of the mandarins. It is true that this superintendence is only nominal; the functionaries only remind the directors of their existence, by extorting money from them from time to time. It is in this way that the inspectors of the finances of the Celestial Empire usually perform their functions; nothing is perfect under the sun. The pawnbroker of Tchou-kiang occupied one of the finest boats in the merchants' street; the façade, well varnished, well decorated, bore an inscription, of which the impertinent appropriateness must often have excited the anger of the *habitués* of the establishment. It was as follows: "Practise economy, so as not to borrow." The Chinese alone are capable of robbing their customers and preaching morality at the same time. When we went on board, we found the

master of the place comfortably installed in the interior of the apartment, on the left of the entrance, just beneath the little altar, which is quite indispensable; he was seated before a table, on which bundles of paper were seen arranged in order, and which were surrounded by a magnificent calculating machine. The Chinese proprietor was handsome, radiant, and prepossessing; his head, taken altogether, was remarkably long, and was resting softly upon a handsome fur dress; finally, he had more the look of a jolly companion than of a usurer; but appearances are so awfully deceitful! When he saw us, our friend gave us a little patronising bow, as much as to say, "I know what brings you;" but when our Chinese interpreter explained to him that we were inquiring travellers and not customers, he rose and overwhelmed us with the warmest manifestations of Chinese politeness. The objects deposited with him were arranged on shelves, on which were inscribed the dates of the loans, and the time granted to the debtors for repaying them. Whilst we were examining, with interest, the room which contained this large collection of curiosities, our guide endeavoured to prove to us the morality of his profession, by persuading us that the pledges which had been left with him would gain considerably by passing through his hands.

"They generally bring us nothing but dirty and

half worn-out rags; but as soon as I receive them I clean them carefully, and it often happens that when they redeem them, which seldom occurs, the owners are astonished to receive quite a new article, instead of the old thing they had left some time before. The transformation which these rags undergo in my hands, is itself worth all the interest I receive."

After this, it must be admitted that the pawn-brokers of Europe are mere children compared with those of the Celestial Empire; the former have never thought of this argument in proof of the excellence of their profession.

As the honest usurer said, the articles left with him were for the most part mere rubbish; they were half worn-out clothes, women's trousers, a few ornaments—the remnants of more prosperous times—a few hereditary pieces of furniture, which the owners had not wished to sell, doubtless from respect to some cherished memory; all which proved to us that it was misery rather than vice which supported this den of usury. We could obtain no information as to the sums advanced annually by these houses, nor as to the rate of interest; to every question on the subject, our Chinese linguist replied by affecting not to understand us.

At first it appeared extraordinary to us that peaceable citizens, people who had retired from business and were in search of quiet, should take

up their abode in moveable habitations which were constantly in a state of agitation ; but a circumstance soon proved to us that the Cantonese who chose their domiciles on the river among were the most prudent and artistically inclined of all the inhabitants of the Empire of Flowers. One day I was proceeding with Callery and a Chinese physician named Kou-Mao to the most distant quarter of the city of boats. We had reached a narrow passage, with floating residences of good appearance on either side, when our native companion asked us if we should like to visit one of his friends. On our replying in the affirmative, he ordered our boatmen to continue along the passage up which we had been proceeding ; but gradually, as we advanced, Kou-Mao gave visible signs of astonishment, and at last, meeting some one he was acquainted with, he inquired where the house of his said friend was moored.

The reply was as follows :—

“ You have long passed the place that it generally occupies, but you need not take the trouble to look for it. I met it yesterday going down the canal, and I don't think it has come back yet.”

At Paris, when a concierge tells us that our most intimate friend is not at home, we have often a thousand reasons for believing that he is telling a falsehood, and we go away with regret ; but on the Tchou-kiang, the absence of the house itself leaves no doubt of that of the proprietor. We steered round,

and descended the canal. Towards evening, we were about to enter our house at Thè-ki-Han, when the doctor suddenly called out, "I see my friend's house," and he told the boatman to make for a very pretty water residence, which was only at a few cables' length from the place where we were being entertained. As soon as Kou-Mao saw the proprietor of this itinerant abode, he explained to him, after some indispensable compliments, the trouble he had had in finding him. The latter replied sententiously :

"It is true that I inhabit the canal when I wish to enjoy that calm and solitude which a sage desires; but sometimes, according to the season, I quit my habitual station to enjoy the beauties of nature, and the charms presented by other localities. During the spring, I ascend the river to admire the green rice grounds, enclosed by bamboos and trees in bloom; at a later period, I descend to where the river is broad, and where there is always a breeze. I witness all day long the coming and going of a thousand vessels which are entering or leaving the river. I perform these little voyages without putting myself out—without altering my habits in any respect. Yesterday, I heard that the men of the West had arrived at the house of Poun-tin-Koua—the plebeian name of Pan-se-Chen—and I came to take up my position here in order to see them: they cannot come out now.

without passing before my eyes. These barbarians have two little girls with them that I wish to see; I wish to judge for myself whether they are prettier than my 'Ten-thousand-pieces-of-gold,' as I am told they are." The little girls were Masdemoiselle Gabriel and Olga de Lagrené, and the "Ten-thousand-pieces-of-gold" the daughter of the speaker.

Kou-Mao hastened to inform his friend that we belonged to the party that had just arrived at the house of Pan-se-Chen, and that M. Callery understood New Chinese like a member of the academy of Hau-lin. This news delighted the aquatic philosopher.

All these habitations, built on the oval hull of a ship, have the form of a long square; so that round about them there is a narrow space, where it is easy to walk, provided you are not giddy. Here men place themselves, with long poles in their hands, to move the house when the proprietor wishes to change the scene. As the craft have neither sails nor rudders, they are moved by means of these poles, which are thrust into the bed of the river, the holders leaning upon them with all their weight; of course it is necessary to keep close to the banks of the river in order to avoid holes.

Kou-Mao's friend took us inside his house; the room in which he received us was like all Chinese rooms belonging to the middle classes. Long strips of painted paper, representing flowers, scenes from

comedies, or sometimes merely sentences written in large characters, were suspended from the walls; there was nothing in the centre of the room; at the sides were two black tables opposite one another, and arm-chairs, of reed or wood, all round. On our arrival, an elderly female of distinguished appearance, bowed and then retired discreetly; another woman, young and becomingly whitened with rice flower, soon after brought us some tea. The two women represented in this household Sarah and her servant Hagar; the distance which separated them was especially indicated by the deformity of the one's feet, and the ample and commodious shoes of the other. But there was nothing to predict for the latter the fate of the Egyptian slave: she was the mother of the "Ten-thousand pieces-of-gold," and it was not to be presumed that Sarah would ever make amends for her long sterility. This establishment was peaceable and comfortable; all the family seemed happy. We heaped a thousand caresses on "Ten-thousand-pieces-of-gold," who, at a word from her father, came and seated herself familiarly on my knees; it could be seen that the affection of the whole family was centred in this little child: her feet were not yet compressed, but her face was painted; and her head was surrounded with a little band of black velvet, delicately embroidered with green and gold silk.

The abode of our new acquaintance remained several days at anchor before Thè-ki-Han. As it was painted in green and gold lines, some of our companions took it for one of those boats of doubtful morality which are called in Chinese "Tuen-poo," and in Portuguese "Cama de desenco." From the room we occupied we could see right into the habitation of our amphibious neighbour. As soon as evening arrived, the master of the house sat down before his door with a fan in his hand, while his two companions were seated at the threshold of the inner door opposite one another, and "Ten-thousand-pieces-of-gold" played at their feet. First of all they talked, then the young woman took some stringed instrument, and accompanied herself with it as she sang one of those strange songs which are never without their charm on the banks of the Tchou-kiang. This tranquil scene was only illuminated by the transparent light which came from the sky, and by the pale flames of the wax tapers which were burning before the altar of the household god.

The reader doubtless expects that I should give him some particulars of those celebrated flower-boats, which are almost as famous as certain public balls in Paris; I will satisfy him. Besides, a visit to the flower-boats, at this hour of the day, by the light of the sun, is in nowise compromising. It is exactly the same as among ourselves, where a person may, without

shocking anybody, visit in the middle of the day one of our grand choreographic establishments; for the female crew who man the flower-boats shun the rays of the sun, like the lepbastered heart-moths of all countries; they abandon the vessels at the first dawn of day, which is why strangers can then visit them. For my own part, I was admitted on board several of these establishments with Messrs. Rondot, Renard, and Hausman, for a mere trifle, and throughout the day not the slightest obstacle was offered to our curiosity. It was not the people of the extreme East who gave the flower-boats their poetical name, but the Europeans. The Chinese, much more prosaic in the things of this life, call these establishments simply *houses of the four pleasures*, designating them, according to their importance and dimensions, by the names of Keng-Heou, Cha-Kou, Tze-Toung, and Tuen-Pou. We will retain, however, the name by which they are commonly known among ourselves.

The flower-boats of the first size, consist of two storeys: namely, a basement, or, if the reader prefers it, a first landing, and an upper storey. But the second landing does not occupy the entire storey. You would call it rather a pavilion, raised above the centre of the establishment. The roof forms a terrace, which is usually furnished with tables and chairs. The basement is divided into a multitude of small apartments, decorated with rather free pic-

tures, after the Chinese fashion, and each containing perhaps a table, a few chairs, and sometimes a bed. The upper storey serves as a cloak-room for the visitors of both sexes, and a store for the various articles consumed. This explains perfectly, by the way, the name given to these boats: Keng-Heou, which signifies compartments and storeys. Certain establishments of smaller dimensions, such—for instance, as those called Cha-Kou—have something in common with the French *cafés-chantants*; for they contain a large public room and a few private chambers.

The flower-boats are the great ornament of the floating city of Canton. Externally, they are decorated with unheard-of luxury; the entrance is covered with carving; the lateral parts, composed, so to say, of open work, are sculptured with an art of which the beautiful Chinese ivory fans can alone convey an idea. The main body of the boat is red, blue, or green, all the raised parts being carefully gilt. In front, four lanterns, brilliantly painted, are hung on masts, and, at the back, four lozenge-shaped streamers wave their joyous colours. The terraces, vestibules, and staircases, are decorated with large china vases, in which great bunches of flowers are constantly kept. It was certainly this display of splendour which originated the name which these boats now bear in all the languages of Europe. On only one occasion did I ever see a

woman in a flower-boat during the day; it occurred as I was going up the stream which leads to Pan-se-Chen's villa. The "house of pleasure" in question was proceeding to the residence of some mandarin, and was towed by two tankas. The canal we were on was so narrow that the two vessels struck each other in passing. The slight shock resulting from this little collision, created a commotion among the passengers of the Tze-Toung, and one of them appeared at a port-hole of the elegant craft. She was a woman of about twenty, rather fat for a Chinese, and well daubed with white and rose, like a water-colour painting. Her cham, which had very wide sleeves, exposed to view a plump arm. She wore handsome gold bracelets, or, at least, perfectly gilt ones. Her gown was of a clear yellow, and embroidered with floss silk; in a word, she was armed, from head to foot, ready to lead a formidable attack on the heart of some rich poussah. On perceiving herself in the presence of four Europeans, our fair sinner did not appear the least troubled, but made a little gesture with her hand, which far from indicated that she was very greatly prejudiced against the *foreign devils*.

The flower-boats compose several streets in the floating city, which streets constitute the most elegant quarter in it. They are naturally the parts most frequented by idlers and pleasure-seekers; but Europeans generally purchase, at the price of

some outrage or other, the satisfaction of going over them, either by night or by day. There is usually at the entrance of these handsome edifices, a crowd of blackguards, who, when they observe a foreigner, pursue him with their cries. Generally, when the presence of a man of white-race is signalled, these horrible, dirty, ragged, and hideous vagrants greet him with cries of *fan-kouai* ! then, seizing their greasy queues with their left hands, they make signs to him that he will have his head cut off, if he approaches the seraglio. Such are the dragons who keep guard at the door of the paradise of Chinese pleasure, but the European, pursued by their clamour, can console himself with the reflection that those who would debar him from entering do not themselves touch the forbidden fruit. I always made a point of not provoking these manifestations when proceeding through this part of the city, in the mandarin-boat which Pan-se-Chen had placed at the disposal of Callery and myself.

The various nautical constructions I have now described, constitute the greater portion of the floating town ; but, as in all grand centres of civilisation, the poor streets are most numerous. These handsome edifices and miserable craft are not, however, the only floating machines borne on the Tchou-kiang. You perceive, at certain distances, groups of craft, of uniform construction, moored

one to the other, representing the large squares in our cities on land. These are official vessels, clusters of shops, or armed barks. Among the first, you readily distinguish the boats belonging to the police, the customs, and the gabel. The police-boats are recognisable by a row of rattan shields which surround their sides. The reader will easily understand that, among this compact mass of human beings, there must be some to represent public order. There is no example of civilisation in the world which does not possess its armed force. These floating posts, filled with subordinate agents of the authorities, are, in the middle of the Tchou-kiang, what the guard-houses and the offices of the sergens-de-ville are in Paris ; but the functionaries charged with protecting the maritime population of Canton have far less to occupy them than their colleagues in Europe. But as regards the custom-house officers, their intervention is required every instant by the junks arriving from all points of the empire. Their boats, which are continually ploughing the stream, are delicate and slim, and only inferior in speed to those of their rivals, the smugglers, who do not fear to anchor, so to say, in these waters. The grand convoys of salt, which come from the centres of production, consist of vessels of the same form, but of very light tonnage ; they are called by the Chinese si-lé-pen.

The salt is thrown into the bottom of the hold, covered only with large reed mats to protect it against the moisture. One frequently saw in the river long ranks of these transports tied together ; reminding one of the convoys of corn which used formerly to navigate the Rhone. In the midst of this strange assembly, there is one group of boats which especially attracts attention by its noisy commotion : it is the one where the duck dealers abound. The keepers sit indolently in their barks, leaving their amphibious charges in perfect freedom. The latter enjoy themselves to their hearts' content—quacking, paddling about, diving and sporting in the stream, in the society of their companions ; but, at the first summons from their master, each company returns, in all haste, to the floating park which serves as its home.

Several inoffensive forts line the banks of the Tchou-kiang, and, in the bed of the river itself, two fortified moles have been constructed, known to Europeans by the names of the Dutch Folly and the French Folly, in remembrance of what I cannot say. To each of these fortlets are moored armed barks, intended to hold in check enemies from without and rebels from within, should there happen to be any ; but it is exceedingly doubtful, whether the cannons which project from their portholes are capable of doing their duty ; this old artillery bids fair to rust on the decks of the Ping-chou without

ever being fired, and in all probability the vessels themselves will rot in the river without ever putting out to sea.

Before concluding this enumeration—already long, though very much abridged—of the structures forming an integral part of the city of boats, I must speak of the European craft and junks which are seen at anchor in the Tchou-kiang. The European flotilla is generally moored in the middle of the stream, opposite the factories, and in the deepest part of the river. It consists of ships of small tonnage, belonging to English, American, and Portuguese merchants, resident at Macao or Hong-kong, and which frequently make the voyage from Canton to the two Christian towns. You perceive, likewise, in the midst of these examples of nautical art in the West, Macao lorchas, employed in a kind of coasting trade, and a few little boats which connect, so to say, the factories with the fine roads of Whampoa, which I have previously designated a branch of the port of Canton.

As for the large junks, which are freighted with the productions of the entire empire, they are stationed high up the river; you may frequently see several hundred at one and the same point. Such a collection of strange vessels is not the least curious sight which the Tchou-kiang offers. They are large floating masses, with little grace about them, shaped nearly after the fashion of old Dutch ships. They

are painted of various colours, and adorned with glaring streamers, and having in front two large, haggard eyes—symbols of vigilance—drawn in a fantastic manner. To the Chinese, a ship is, in some degree, an animated body, and to deprive it of the organs of sight would be to expose it wantonly to the risk of being dashed to pieces against the rocks. These large vessels riding at anchor, with their great goggle eyes and their straggling streamers, resemble so many amphibious animals, thrown up high and dry on the beach. A Chinaman can distinguish at the first glance whence these modern Noah's arks come; he recognises those which bring rice and sugar from the Fo-kien, or teas and silks from Nankin, or cinnamon from the Kuang-si; and the san-chou from the inland provinces.

No city in Europe can give an idea of the movement and life which reign in the streets of Canton. The streets of Canton alone can convey an idea of the feverish activity which reigns on the Tchou-kiang. In the midst of this prodigious passing and repassing, of goods in the course of being shipped or unshipped, of fat-tings, of lorchas, of junks, of vessels coming to anchor or setting sail, of mandarins cruising about in their rich craft, and of tradesmen proceeding to business, the itinerant cooks enumerate their ragouts; the manufacturers of tao-fou praise their toothsome production; the barbers offer their services; the brokers propose

an exchange or purchase; in a word, all the professions contributing to the pleasures and the wants of a great concourse of men, are here in boats, pushing, jostling, elbowing one another: it is, as it were, a regatta of petty commerce and trade! And yet from this struggle at one point, from so many different interests and from so many rivalries, no disorder, no dispute, no quarrel ever arises! The politeness so extolled by the philosophers of the Celestial Empire, has rendered the people the gentlest, and most obliging nation in the universe. The Chinese assist and never attempt to injure each other.

The population which is born, which lives, and which dies upon the river, is not so illiterate as might be imagined. All professions are represented on the Tchou-kiang, even that of the school-master! It is no rare thing to meet tanka-girls who can read and write. I first heard this fact asserted by my friend Rondot, whose assertion, however, was not successful in convincing me. But some days afterwards, our worthy commercial delegate came to my lodgings, accompanied by his confidential agent, old A-Tchoun, a great Chinese original, whose profile I should certainly sketch, if I had time to tell everything. The old interpreter held in his hand a small pamphlet, one of those Chinese books which would put to the blush for cheapness our novels at four sous. He saluted me respectfully, and said in Portuguese:—

“ You will not believe, Sir, so my master has assured me, that certain tanka-girls can read. I want to prove this to you, and we will go for that purpose to the boat of A-Moun.”

When we had cast off and put out into the stream, A-Tchoun handed his book to the tanka-girl, who took it, read the title, and then returned it. This experiment was not quite decisive for me. A-Moun might have said to her compatriot:— “ Good day,” or, “ How are you ? ” I immediately made a second experiment. I handed our pretty boat-girl a charming stone seal, given me, as a friendly memento, by my excellent friend, Dr. Macgowan, the medical missionary. The young girl scarcely glanced at it, and exclaimed:—

“ Y-Van ! ”

Chinese is better adapted for punning than any other language; the engraved characters represented the consonance of my name, and indicated my profession, accompanied by an epithet my modesty forbids me from repeating. The young creature added, with a smile:—

“ If I am ill, you will attend me, will you not ? ”

This little incident caused me extreme surprise, and inspired me with an exceedingly tender feeling for the learned boat-girl.

“ What ! ” I exclaimed, addressing old A-Tchoun ; “ what ! do not your big, stupid manda-

rins prefer a fine girl like A-Moun—industrious, intelligent, and educated—to their painted, hobbling dolls?”

“How can you think of such a thing?” exclaimed the old Chinaman, with a gesture of dismay. “Were such a thing to happen, it would be the overthrow of the laws of the Empire! A-Moun belongs to a reprobate class. The tanka-girls are very lucky that their mothers sometimes give birth to boys; but for that, no one would marry them. Oh! if you only knew how such people marry!”

“Come—let us hear. How do such people marry?” I inquired, indignant at A-Tehoun’s prejudice.

“Like beasts! like beasts!” answered the old linguist. “Without any previous proposal; without a woman as go-between; without anything which is practised among well-educated persons. In harvest-time, any man of their class who wishes to marry, goes into the next field and gathers a little sheaf of rice, which he fastens to one of his oars. Then, when he is in the presence of the tanka-girl of his choice, he puts his oar into the water, and goes several times round the boat belonging to the object of his affections. The next day, if the latter accept his homage, she, in her turn, fastens a bunch of flowers to her oar, and comes rowing about near her betrothed. The relations then assemble in the young girl’s bark.

Some barbarous songs are sung, and the marriage is consecrated !”

“ Come, come !” I exclaimed, turning towards Rondot, “ just make a little sure, as you speak English-Chinese perfectly, whether the old mystifier is not laughing at us, with his poetic marriages.”

My friend questioned the beautiful A-Moun, who replied mournfully :—

“ When any one contracts a marriage, it is necessary to make certain conditions. The sheaf of rice signifies that the young man undertakes to toil laboriously to maintain her he loves. The girl replies, by the bunch of flowers, that she will give him happiness in exchange !”

“ Oh ! A-Moun !” I exclaimed, on hearing this explanation ; “ if I had two oars and a little skiff, I would go and gather a sheaf of rice, and come and row round your boat !”

My exclamation did not compromise me in the opinion of old A-Tchoun, for I had uttered it in French. A-Moun did not understand it any more than he did, and the declaration, that meant nothing, was lost in the noise of the oars which beat the Tchou-kiang.

I continued, however, sadly :—

“ How monotonous you must find this life upon the river, my poor girl ! With your education and

tastes, it strikes me that a little house on shore, adjoining a little garden, and a few friends, would suit you much better."

"Why?" said the young creature. "Do we not possess here everything which can content us? Have not all the ages of life their pleasures on the bed of the Tchou-kiang as well as on shore? In our boats, the child receives all the care his weakness requires; the young man exercises his profession in peace, and the old man, also, finds the diversion and repose his age demands. We shall inhabit the land only too soon!" added the beautiful tanka-girl, with a sigh. "When we are dead, it is there that our habitation is, and our bodies repose there for ever. After all, we inhabit the earth a much longer time than the water!"

Thus, those nations of India, who live far from rivers, come and throw their dead into the Ganges to purify them, while the denizens of the aquatic domains of the Tchou-kiang dig a hole in the ground for theirs, to secure them a peaceful sleep during eternity!

A great deal has been said lately about the population of the floating city of the Tchou-kiang. Men, in general, find a very great pleasure in disputing with and contradicting each other; polemics are a necessity of their nature. In China, subjects of conversation are rare among Europeans. Con-

sequently, everything affords matter for controversy, and I have been present at interminable polemic contests concerning the number of the floating population of the Tchou-kiang. Some made this population mount up to a fabulous number; others, on the contrary, asserted it did not surpass that of our third-class towns. Those who maintained this last opinion, were, generally speaking, strong-minded personages, avowed opponents of the Jesuit fathers, and of all the works the latter have produced, no matter whether the books were mystical or scientific. Now, the learned propagandists having, in their works, extolled the manners, government, and size of Chinese cities, their antagonists consider it a philosophical duty to deny, without investigation, everything thus advanced. I confess I never took a part in these warm discussions, reserving the right of setting myself up, for myself, as the judge of the debate. In questions of this kind, I have a peculiar method of arriving at a knowledge of the truth: I simply consult public opinion, especially that of the vulgar. Therefore, addressing A-Moun, I said to her:—

“You are a learned person; could you inform me what is the number of the inhabitants of the floating city?”

At this question the beautiful boat-girl burst out into a loud fit of laughter, and her hand let go one

of the oars ; then, seizing a stone jug at her feet, she dipped it in the stream, and, taking it out again, said to me :

“ Could you tell me how many drops of water there are in this vase ? ”

I laughed, in my turn, at her answer. Looking towards old A-Tchoun, I put the same question to him. He mumbled, for a few seconds, some words between his teeth, and at last said :

“ There may be six hundred thousand souls ! ”

It was evident the old linguist knew no better than the boat-girl, but, in his character of a learned official, he wished it to appear that he did. I then applied to my habitual resource, to that particularly amiable and obliging man, Pan-se-Chen, who said with his usual good sense :

“ We have not got an official return of the population of the Tchou-kiang ; but we know, on sure authority and by an exact return, that the river accommodates more than eighty thousand boats, large and small. Now, admitting that, one with the other, each of these craft contains four inhabitants, which is very moderate, we obtain the enormous total of three hundred and twenty thousand, which does not strike me as exaggerated. ”

This total is precisely that given by Morrison ; by the authors of the *Chinese Repository* ; by the Catholic missionaries ; and, in a word, by all those

who have been long acquainted with China. After what has been already said, I leave the reader to choose between this opinion and that which gives the Tchou-kiang a population not exceeding a hundred and sixty thousand souls.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE FLOATING-CITY—CANTON THE
ABODE OF PLEASURE—CHINESE BEAUTIES.

THE floating-city presents itself under two very different aspects: during the day, it is an industrial hive, whose moving honeycombs are occupied by a laborious and intelligent race—ever active, never flinching from the severest exactions of incessant toil. By night, the same city is a rich and beautiful courtesan, crowned with flowers, decked with bright jewels, murmuring, with winsome voice, quaint melodies and songs of love-in-idleness, and plying, with little reticence, her voluptuous trade, under the shadow of the dark. Under the clear light of the sun, the matter-of-fact observer has perhaps contemplated with wonder this austere, unrelaxing population, so painfully greedy of gain, which in the pursuit of the means of physical well-being, of that very wealth which is the pledge of independence, contributes by its selfish activity to the pleasures of the whole world. By the trembling radiance of the stars, the reverist or the poet mingles in the astonishing festival the city nightly prepares for herself. He recognises with delight the realisation of his wildest fancies, his strangest

imaginings, and in presence of this vision of mystery, his spirit floats continually between the dream and the reality. If, in their intoxication, the opium-smokers of the Celestial Empire, retained any consciousness of the world without, they would discover that it is idle to be chasing, through the perils of a transient delirium, hallucinations which are incessantly enacted around them. They would forswear their daily poison-trance to share—free from its penalties of horror, and with all the peculiar intimacy of emotion which the real in life alone can give—in the indescribable spectacle of which we shall seek to convey some idea.

When darkness comes down, the belated boats return to their proper localities; the oars are silent in the populous streets; the floating cottage, made fast to its neighbour, is laid up for a quiet night; and all the family, seated under the roof of bamboo, before an enormous dish of rice, enjoys as it may the unsavoury meal of poverty, by the light of a little earthen lamp, which glimmers in the dark like a fire-fly. On board the habitations of the tradespeople, an illuminated globe, bearing the name of the proprietor, is hung up before the entry; while the proprietor himself, seated at table with his youngest child, and waited upon by his wife, or by his wives, is relishing the savoury viands which conjugal solicitude has prepared for him. The flower-boats now suspend from the mast-head

their gigantic lanterns, brilliantly painted with dragons entwined, and nameless blossoms; and these semi-transparent beacons serve to point out those dazzling abodes.

This transformation is the work of an instant of time; it is literally done under your eyes at a glance. The waves of the Tchou-kiang, only the moment before of a dull and dusky green, flash back all at once the stars in the sky, the humble lamp which lights the supper of the labourer, the spherical lantern which hangs in front of the quiet room of the tradesman, and those more subdued and tender fires towards which the gay night-flies and the heavy beetles will soon bend their course,—that is, the slender girls of Han, and the squat and corpulent mandarins. Here then we have, in some sort, the first act of the nocturnal drama nightly enacted upon the bosom of the Tchou-kiang; an act performed in dumb show, for there is a cessation of all accustomed sounds along the bank of the enchanted river, and one might suppose that the actors were recruiting themselves before entering upon a fresh scene.

But soon some indeterminate sounds begin to stir the soft air. Single, half-timorous voices are singing on board the tradesmen's barks—Chinese Hagars, probably, who are soothing their masters after the fashion of her whose acquaintance we made under the auspices of our friend the aquatic.

philosopher. In the tankas may be heard other songstresses trying their clear-toned, perhaps rather virile voices. Who knows but these may be the barbarian melodies of which old A-Tchoun told us, with which they celebrate the nuptials of the tanka-girls? Perhaps A-Moun is married to-night! . . . Yet, no—it is the fair boat-woman herself who is initiating us—M. Rondot, M. Renard, and me—in a portion of the mysteries of the floating-city, and who puts it in our power to peep a little into the inner life of her order. Not unfrequently, the boats of the poor present family groups full of grace and natural simplicity; the children especially being the objects of the tenderest caresses. The father, who has just ceased labour, worn with fatigue, takes upon his knees the youngest of his children; he encircles the little creature with his arms, that it may not fall; and so, rice-bowl in one hand and bamboo chopsticks in the other, he feeds the babe with the soft, assiduous patience of an attentive mother.

The tanka-girls, contrary to the practice among the women of the *bourgeoisie* and upper ranks, eat with their husbands, it being only fair that the food won by their common labour should be partaken of in common. We felt an interest of a very attractive kind in watching these poor families at their meals. The dish of rice and fish, which constitutes the whole repast, is placed upon the deck of the vessel;

the father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother are ranged all round it upon cane seats, while the children, basin in hand, edge in and take places at the corners as they can. There is laughter, there is conversation, in these rude homes, and the shadow of thoughts of privation to come falls not upon the simple feast: each one, with a cheerful heart, eats his share of the meagre reward of a day of painful toil.

But, to speak truth, this patriarchal innocence does not preside in every one of these humble cabins. A-Moun pointed out to us some of the boats where women—and only women—were seated, in a squatting position, on the poop and round the sides. When a visitor introduces himself to these girls, they drop a mat woven of cane-strips at the back, and hang up a shawl in front; and although under these circumstances no curious eye could see into their retreat, the little lamp is quenched, and the boat lies unseen in the shadow of its shame. Alas! the poetic region of the tankas is like an ancient eclogue; the simplicity of nature is continually shouldered by a sinister sensuality.

This second stage of the nocturnal phase is commonly spread over some hours. At last, the lamps of the poor die out by degrees, and the songs are heard no more from the tankas and the tradesmen's boats. There is sleep in these peaceful abodes, and opulent vice lifts her forehead and breaks the silence

with a freer voice. It might be supposed that the flower-boats wait until the taper is extinguished in chaste and well-reputed domiciles, in order to invoke the presence of their own numerous patrons. Upon the roof beats the tam-tam; rockets are fired from the mast-heads; from every window sounds the music of shrill voices, and issues a half-muffled light. It must be confessed these procedures of invitation are very successful. On every hand, you may now see, noiselessly threading the stream, boats laden with girls, boats laden with wealthy merchants,—yes, and boats laden with young students. It is even so! Just the same here as with us in Paris! Dance or not dance, these Chinese students find their way to their casino! But let us watch. Though some of these motley cargoes discharge on board the flower-boats, other cargoes are leaving them;—it is not uncommon to see gorgeous mandarin-boats, lanterns lit and pendants flying, glide up to take in a cargo of handsome girls, and then glide off again, to unload their charming freight before some one of the palaces which border the canals of the Tchou-kiang!

I had never seen the flower-boats by night, except at a distance, when at last an unforeseen circumstance gave me an opportunity of observing one of these establishments as closely as was possible, without penetrating into the interior. One evening, Pan-se-Chen sent word to Callery and me that, if

we would hold ourselves at his disposal at about eight o'clock, he would accompany us in a tour. At the hour agreed upon, the boatmen were before Thè-ki-Han, and we found the mandarin installed in the saloon of the vessel, leisurely sipping a cup of tea. All the blinds were drawn up, except those immediately in front of the great man himself, in order that we might see outside. After the usual compliments had passed, our host had us settled in a corner of the room, by two half-open windows through which we could see without being seen. Thus secured from all accidents, since the mandarin was with us, visible to all observers, and his name legible on every flag, we traversed the city of Tchou-kiang.

After this exploration, I can assert that Europeans—Europeans resident in China, I mean—have understated the enormous extent of river surface which is populated. The boat which carried us was rowed along by six oarsmen; we rowed for several consecutive hours without repassing by the same streets, and it was high festival every part of the way! Up the river, down the river, along the branching canals, in the bays and bends of the stream, everywhere, there was song, revelry, and illumination. As soon as we came up before a first-class boat, everybody repeated our mandarin's name, and the pretty barks which were in waiting before the large establishments, like carriages at

the doors of our theatres, ranged themselves on each side to make way for us. In this style, we reached a magnificent canal which Pan-se-Chen told us was called Han-Leou-Han, from the multitude of flower-boats which are found there, ranged in their order. Indeed, the two quays were bordered by magnificent Han-Leu; the long line of these palaces stretching out far into the distance, and giving quite a fairy-like aspect to the quarter.

Chinese tapers, imprisoned in thin cages of gauze, shut up in little cells of translucent pearl, shed of course only a muffled light. This dim lustre, while it shows objects to the beholder, tinges them with a still and slumberous hue. The larger structures, athwart the arabesques and carven openings of whose four façades this white, pale light stole dimly, would have resembled temples of the god of eternal repose, had it not been for the strange noises which issued from their depths, and rang loudly overhead. The prolonged beating of gongs, the incessant explosion of rockets, and the vibrations of brazen strings, made these monuments alive, so that they suggested those noisy places of resort with us where people dance with frenzy, carried away by an excitement which will never have any sway over the apathetic inhabitants of the Land of Flowers. It is, I think, the contrast between these loud, obtrusive noises, and the languid

dying light, which communicates to the quaint, Babylonish clangours of the scene an inexpressible charm, which passionate admirers of artistic music cannot bring themselves to believe.

We passed and repassed several times in front of the enchanted palaces of Han-Leou-Han, and we were enabled to snatch glimpses of certain unguarded details in the dissolute life of the pleasure-loving children of the Celestial Empire. Upon the terrace of Han-Leu we saw a mandarin of the blue button seated at a table, loaded with preserved fruits pyramidally piled upon little salvers made of porcelain. Opposite this individual was seated a young girl, who kept on singing while the voluptuous liver in question was nonchalantly tasting here and there of the delicacies spread before him. This functionary had not thought it necessary to doff any of the insignia of his office; his hat still bore its brilliant ornament of the peacock's feather, and his long robe indicated his rank. The fair young singer had her head dressed with flowers, her netted hair was gathered above the ear, and then stretched out behind her head, like the plumage of a raven. She wore a rose-coloured cham, trimmed with black, which did not come below her knees, and under which was a blue petticoat plaited in narrow folds. The listener seemed delighted, either with her voice, or with the words chosen by his musical plaything, for he manifested his approbation every

minute by bobbing his head like a child's toy rabbit.

At another moment we came suddenly upon a more developed spectacle, seen through the parted blinds of a very handsome cabin. Two players, seated opposite each other, were engaged in a lively contest over a chess-board, and two charming-looking women were the spectators, apparently full of the liveliest interest in the game. Upon a couch, or rather a divan, placed farther back, lay a Chinese getting ready to smoke his opium. He had thrown off his long robe and his slippers, and his cham and pantaloons were beautifully white. There he reclined patiently enough, stretched at full length, whilst a young girl prepared his pipe for him. It will be seen that it is well-behaved, almost tasteful, vice which resorts to the flower-boats; and, in fact, men of letters, government officials, rich merchants, and grave seniors, frequent these abodes of joy without in the least suffering in their good repute. Precisely as with us, the best-conducted and most strait-laced people do not feel bound to withdraw their confidence, sympathy, and esteem from many of our leading *littérateurs*, artists, financiers, administrators, physicians, and others, because they may be found occasionally in our gardens with—or without—flowers!

On our leaving this quarter, Pan-se-Chen asked us what impression our nocturnal excursion had

produced upon our minds. We expressed our rapture in strong terms, upon which this wealthy functionary drew a deep sigh, and exclaimed:—

“ Ah ! Canton ! Canton ! It is indeed the abode of pleasure ! Well does the proverb say : ‘ Young man, go not to Canton ; old man, go not to Sou-Tchuen.’ The atmosphere respired here, saturated with perfume, tremulous with the musical murmurs of passion, is as fatal to inexperienced youth as the icy breath of our northern provinces is to feeble age ! ”

“ I cannot deny,” said Callery, “ that the bosom of the Tchou-kiang by night offers one of the finest spectacles to be seen in the world ; but, leaving out the flower-boats, I don’t see that your city is any richer in pleasures than other parts of the Celestial Empire.”

Pan-se-Chen fidgetted on his seat, and exclaimed with great warmth, “ What ! Indeed, but we can command here a profusion of all the delights which are only parsimoniously scattered elsewhere. Every year we receive ship-loads of the girls of Sou-tchou-Fou and Nankin ; and even Mongolia supplies us with her contingent of blooming young Tartars. Our cooks are celebrated all over the empire. Where but here did they invent those exquisite dishes—the brainless duck, and the empty-hearted force-meat balls ? Our fruits excite envy wherever nice things are loved ; when the shells of the *lit-chi*

begin to redden, messengers start from Canton every day, to carry branches laden with fruit to the Emperor. And his journey is reckoned with such nicety, that the porter reaches the palace-gate at the very moment when the pulp has reached its luscious maturity ! Then, look at our pleasure-gardens : in all the eighteen provinces, are there any that can compare with them ? Our kiosks and pavilions, beautifully painted, and delicately sculptured, rise from the midst of flowery pyramids, where blossom is piled on blossom. Then, what more can the lovers of sensual joys expect ? Yet the sage and the man of letters are equally well catered for in our Canton. Here we have the greatest number of antique bronzes, folded silks voluptuously painted, and ancient objects in lacquer-work—to inspect which the greatest artists of the world meet together here. I will maintain it, Canton is the wonder of the universe !”

Callery did not see fit to reply to this eulogistic plea for the Chinese city. When our mandarin had taken breath, he added, addressing my friend:—

“ And you, in the land of the West, have you anything to compare even with our flower-boats ?”

His interlocutor endeavoured to describe to him establishments of a similar character in France ; and then spoke of our theatres ; but Pan-se-Chen interrupted him :

“ What ! when you go to see a play, you enter

a building where you must mix with the crowd, and are liable to be jostled by everybody? For my part, when I want to witness a theatrical performance, I make the actors come to my house, and invite my friends. . . . And then, what pleasure can you find in your gardens where the dancing goes on? Respectable people can take no part in such a diversion; dancing-girls are a great deal more like boys than women. We have some here, and we now and then ask them to dinner, to make them jump afterwards, but no one would admit them into the women's apartments. What attraction for a great lord can there be in a woman who walks like a boy, straddles about, and could even run, if we wanted her to do it? Ah, no! the only lovely woman is she whose feet are so small that she totters like a baby, and can scarcely stir from place to place. Why, what can equal the graceful movements she is forced to make in order to hold herself up? Well, well, one of these days I will make one of these splay-footed girls dance in your presence, and you shall tell me what you really do think of her!"

Pan-se-Chen ceased. Some days after, he gave a fête to the Ambassador, in which a young *danseuse* from Peking was one of the performers. Between the acts, our mandarin had me conducted behind the scenes into the presence of the actress. She was a child of fourteen, who had none of the timidity of Chinese girls in general; I took her

hand, and she did not withdraw it. Although professionally accustomed to vigorous exercise, she was exceedingly plump—indeed too fat—and showed none of the slenderness and grace of frailer plants trained in the shadow of domestic seclusion. Upon the whole, I was of the opinion of Pan-se-Chen about her. I would *not* have had such girls in my women's apartments—if I had been a Chinese. The musical abilities of the girl were very poor, and she danced like a tumbler, frisking and springing about with little taste.

While we were talking of China and France, we reached the landing-place of a house built upon the bank of a canal, of which the mandarin had given us the name. Inviting us to step out of the boat, Pan-se-Chen said to us, "I have brought you hither in order to carry out the design I have in view."

Callery, who alone understood these mysterious words, paid little attention to them. We crossed a vestibule paved with marble, where servants stood in waiting, wearing the blue cham and short trousers. We ascended to the first storey by a staircase ornamented with tufts of flowers, and were then led into a chamber decorated with paintings of the gayest description, while in the middle there was laid out a collation, of which every component dish was indigenous. I looked at Callery, with a countenance which asked as plainly as possible, "Do you know

“what this means?” but he bit his lips and held his peace. Having nothing better to do, I spent my time in examining the pictures, which bore no resemblance to those well-known water-colour products of Cantonese art which are shipped to Europe. They were real Chinese paintings, done for the Chinese. One of them, representing a woman, seemed to me to exaggerate the type adopted by Celestial artists to such a degree, that I begged Callery to ask Pan-se-Chen if it was a portrait. The mandarin drew himself up, with great vivacity, in front of the picture I was examining, and passing his finger up and down over the surface, said:—

“Nature, in her creations, can never be the true rival of Art; she is powerless to produce anything so perfect. Observe these sloping eyes, how they incline to a point towards the nose! And that mouth, which is so small that a grain of rice would cover it! I speak not of feet, for this picture has none*—it is not a woman; it is the loveliest bird under heaven! If such a piece of perfection really existed, the Emperor could not buy her with all his treasures. But I tell you the daughters of men can

* We apprehend the great man did not intend to convey that the “bird” was, speaking *au pied de la lettre*, footless; but that her “golden lilies” had been tapered away by the sovereign will of creative art till they had merged in her legs!—T.

never perfectly resemble the types produced by the sublime imaginations of our painters !”

So much for Chinese appreciation of beauty ! For these men, *blasés* as they are, it is not beauty which is beautiful ; it is something extraordinary, foreign, extravagant, fantastical. The faulty exaggeration of an object, far from repelling, attracts them. A well-rounded hump is in their eyes almost a gem of loveliness. This perversion of the taste disquiets the fancy, and sets them dreaming of impossibilities ; under the continual influence of unnatural *stimuli*, the senses are deadened, and the exhausted being, even while he may yet be called young, has to rouse his benumbed faculties by the use of shameful devices, of the very existence of which Western nations are happily ignorant. This demoralisation is more common in China than is generally supposed, and makes frightful ravages among the population, having to some degree passed into a custom. At this present time, men of all ranks are unblushingly obscene. Pan-se-Chen unrolled before us, appearing to look at them solely as objects of artistic interest, a series of pictures executed upon white satin, compared with which the celebrated picture of Parrhasius, bequeathed to Tiberius, according to Suetonius, by a Roman senator, would have been almost decent. Some of these roller-paintings cost more than a hundred and twenty pounds ; and many of them, of a high anti-

quity, were masterpieces in their way: they were woven like the celebrated portraits executed by the Lyonnese.

While we were being initiated, by means of these paintings, into the mysteries of the women's apartments, the door of the saloon opened noiselessly, and a domestic admitted three small-footed ladies. "Evil be to him that evil thinks!" You may throw doors and windows open, and read aloud what I am about to relate.

As soon as these women came in, the disgusting silken pictures were rolled up precipitately, and Pan-se-Chen said to us, "I might have taken you to my house; only when one has at home a regular wife and twelve ladies beside, it is impossible to do anything secretly. So I have induced these young ladies, upon whose discretion I can rely, to visit us here, under this humble roof."

Callery and I exchanged looks, thinking that the moment for the revelations was nigh; but we were mistaken; a Chinese never hurries things.

"Let us sit down at table," said the mandarin; "we will drink a cup of tea."

The young ladies, as Pan-se-Chen called them, stared at us at first with large, startled eyes; but it was not long before their surprise gave place to another feeling, and they burst into loud laughter under our very faces. I imagine there may have been an excess of self-appreciation in the feeling

which led Callery to assure me, confidently, that the girls were laughing at our dresses only, and not at our figures. But, for my part, I was enraptured to have before my eyes, within the touch of my hand, the living reality of the figures I had been so long studying on the walls of the apartments. I came to the conclusion, either that the Chinese artists had been thoroughly inspired by their models, or that the ladies of the Flowery Empire managed to model their own persons, with great success, after the conceptions of their popular painters. Mademoiselle Vo-Lon was very little like these graceful young women; these were the most charming types of Chinese beauty, while the other was an ugly specimen of the race. Then, the daughter of Vicente was a poor child of humble birth,—serious, shy, and hard-working,—whilst our visitors on this occasion had no trade but that of pleasing: to be pretty and seductive was their one pursuit in life; and, moreover, they were perfectly at home in all the engaging little ways and infantine coquetries which make the chief charm of the daughters of Han.

These young creatures sang rather than spoke, and their least movements were stamped with that affectation, which is the height of “manners” in China. They were admirably got up. Their chams, of red or blue, were embroidered round the edges; their pantaloons were held up by a girdle, whose

fringe fell almost to the feet ; their little feet were cased in charming shoes wrought in gold, and the peak of the toe had a diminutive bell, which tinkled gaily when they walked, or rather *toddled*, on the handsome floor. This bell was to our eyes an emblem : it signified that these etiolated beings held no higher place in the affections of a Chinese, than a spaniel aforetime held in those of our great-great-grandmothers. Some little girls waited on us. These domestics were simply enough clad, in a blue cham with large trousers ; their feet, which were as nature made them, were enclosed in shoes, of which the sole was very high, and made in the shape of a truncated and inverted cone—that is, the narrowest part touched the ground, so that they seemed to be walking on stilts.

A very charming and winsome object is a Chinese woman eating. Our pretty messmates helped themselves, with the ends of their chopsticks, from the dishes spread upon the table, to a Nankin jujube, a bit of ginger, or of water-lily confection, and carried it to their lips with a mincing delicacy of movement, which made them look like pet birds being fed, a beak-full at a time.

When, grace being said, we had taken a cup of tea, the following dialogue was carried on, in a half whisper, between our interpreter and the rich mandarin :

“ You have told us that these ladies are women

from the flower-boats ; that is the case, is it not ?”

“ Just so ; and, what is more, these three are the loveliest to be found just now in all the establishments of Han-Leou-Han.”

“ The lot of these women must be a very pitiable one ?”

“ Pitiable ! why ? They are the happiest women in Canton ! They are fondly sought after by the wealthy inhabitants, and have always suitors at their feet. Have you not observed how their fingers are loaded with jewels, and their wrists and ankles with bracelets ? These are gifts offered up to their beauty ; you may imagine that they are living in clover.”

“ While their youth lasts, I can understand that they may not have much reason to complain of their condition ; but, later in life, what befalls them ?”

“ Precisely what befalls other women : they tend their children, living quietly enough with their husbands in the home into which they have been adopted.”

“ Their husbands ! Do you mean to tell me that those women marry ?”

“ Nearly all of them ; but even those who don’t marry, are very much sought after to take the second place in large houses.”

“ You are bantering me ! It is absurd to speak of introducing into a respectable home a woman of such antecedents !”

"Why? I have under my own roof two young girls whom I found in the Han-Leu, and they are neither the least beautiful nor the least charming occupants of the women's quarter in my house."

"Really, I cannot believe that you have taken home to your wives two women who have been leading this sad life."

On these words, Pan-se-Chen made a gesture of astonishment, rose, and, placing himself before Callery, said to him:—

"I do not understand your squeamishness! We Chinese have none of these prejudices, and we find ourselves all the better off for being without them. In our eyes a woman is a jewel which does not lose any of its value though being admired by everybody. If I go to a lapidary, and see some precious stone of a pure water, an emerald clasp, or ancient pan-che, in fine preservation, am I entitled to despise them, disparage their beauty, and refuse to wear them, under the silly pretext that others have worn them before me? When people pay you ingots of silver, do you depreciate their value because others have handled them before you? . . . Very good! believe me, a woman is like the precious stone or the bar of silver; she keeps her value so long as she keeps her beauty, her complexion, her figure, her elegance, and he is a great fool who refuses to appropriate her, on the ground of scruples void of common sense."

I have already given the ideas of the Chinese about beauty : you have here their theory of love. Rather crude, you will say ; but, after all, *naïve*, exact, intelligible as an axiom ! When we withdrew from the little house of Pan-se-Chen, it was three o'clock in the morning ; the districts where the flower-boats lay were still illuminated ; gongs were still sounding away ; fireworks crackling and whizzing, and voices singing as before. These noises mingled confusedly with the accustomed sounds of early dawn from the noisy sailors on board the junks ready to set sail. The dissolute child of opulence finished his night of revelry to the same music which ushered in for the poor labourer his day of toil.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERIOR OF A MANDARIN'S MANSION—THE WOMEN'S APARTMENTS—THE PRINTING OFFICE—THE LABORATORY—THE LIBRARY—THE EMPEROR'S PORTRAIT—ARTICLES OF VERTU—CHINESE SERVANTS.

THE promises which had been made to me, and especially my intimate relations with Callery, conferred upon me the right of free access to the official mansion of Pan-se-Chen, which is situated in the street of Che-pa-Pou ; that is, of the eighteenth district at the western extremity of the suburbs of Canton. This house is notably that of a great lord, and is composed of three interior courts surrounded by buildings, which have one storey over the ground-floor. Each court has its proper use : one is surrounded with arches similar to those in our Rue de Rivoli, under which are at work artists and workmen in the pay of the great mandarin. Another opens into the reception-rooms where business is discussed, and where visitors are welcomed ; and in the third is the women's quarter, with the dining-rooms and all the domestic offices. This space, lying between four handsome façades, is gaily decorated, being rather a garden than an inner court. There is a little pond in the centre, whose greenish water is covered with lotus-leaves. The edges are shaded by

“sighing” willows (as they are called in China), and the variously-shaped garden-plots are crowded with azaleas, chrysanthemums, and peonies. Hither comes the chief wife of the mandarin to take her walks, sheltered from the sun, and attended by twelve companions. It has been pretended that Pan-se-Chen has a house for every one of his wives, but nothing is more incorrect; wives of the second class, the “tisé,” being in reality servants, living in the same house with the wife, and under her authority.

One must have penetrated into this house, or rather have almost lived in it, to comprehend what constitutes luxury and elegance in Chinese domestic life. I went over every section of this mansion, visited every room, from the private cabinet of the master, to the *interior apartment* of the legitimate wife. The old household gods no doubt trembled with indignation at my presumption, and I was particularly struck with the magnificence of the furniture, the splendour of the decorations, and—the niggardly provision for *comfort*! The little chamber of Madame Pan-se-Chen, for instance, is an admirable boudoir—sofas, chairs, toilet-tables, and the rest being made of beautiful wood, chiselled with infinite art—but her bed, lying underneath a network of gauze, is fitter for a nun’s penance than to rest the soft limbs of a delicate lady. A few strips of bamboo in a nankin palliasse serve for a mattress, and the

quilt is attached to the cotton sheet. I might say just the same of a splendid hall which Pan-se-Chen had just got completed. The floor, in wood of different colours, was covered with beautiful devices; the ceilings were gilt like a shrine. The floor, cornices, and walls were brightened with that wonderful varnish which makes the substances to which it is applied look like blocks of marble, porphyry, or other rare stones, cut and polished. But all this luxury was cold and comfortless; our own splendid interiors, overdone as they are with huge floating curtains, seemed preferable. The total absence of anything in the shape of hangings was all the more noticeable at this time of year; the north winds were sometimes very keen, and the Chinese assumed, with an evident consciousness of its comfortableness, their cham which is lined with the soft, silky furs of Astrakan. In the house of Che-pa-Pou, then, Pan-se-Chen had not effected a happy alliance between Chinese magnificence and European comfort; perhaps in order that he might not wound the jealous prejudices of the great officers of state who visit him.

One morning our friend the mandarin begged us—Callery, Rondet, and myself—to take a passing glance at that part of his mansion which is consecrated to science and art; anxious, apparently, to let us see that a Celestial Sybarite could be also a man of learning and taste. We found among other things a

regular printing-office—a Chinese printing-office, of course ; and Pan-se-Chen, or rather Callery, explained to us that this Cantonese Mæcenas caused to be struck off ancient inscriptions, and old maxims grown scarce, whose reproduction was generally desired among the learned. Three writers, who appeared to us very skilful, were tracing with the pencil ancient characters upon large slabs of marble. They were young men of intelligent appearance ; they wore their long blue robes and their caps in student-fashion. Like our law and medical students, they exaggerated the fashion of their country. Their pigtails, absurdly long, trailed at their heels, the fingers of their right hands were armed, not with nails, but with claws ; and they wore at the top of the back of the head a circlet of coarse hair, which was not by any means pleasing. As soon as a slab was covered with characters, the engravers took their place, and traced with the graver the hieroglyphic letters. We examined several of these stereotyped plates, and Pan-se-Chen ordered some impressions to be struck off in our presence. The process is very simple : By means of a very flexible brush the printer applies the ink, then with his right hand he spreads out a sheet of damp paper, and passes another brush, dry, across it. The impression was as sharp as we obtain with our finished presses. When we left his printing-office, Pan-se-Chen showed us into a studio for

painting, where artists were busy reproducing ancient pictures, which his erudite industry had exhumed from their venerable hiding-places.

We next went into a chemical laboratory, where, to our great surprise, they were making azotic acid. It is commonly believed that the Chinese themselves make no mineral acid; we had shared in that belief, and were glad to be now undeceived by our own eyes. Rondot made upon the spot a drawing of the furnace and the distilling apparatus, and he has described, in a paper of great interest, the processes in use at the laboratory of Pan-se-Chen. But there is nothing economical about the matter, for the producer maintained that a hundred grammes of this acid cost him over thirty shillings. The acid is used in our friend's establishment for making detonating silver, with which percussion caps are afterwards manufactured. The fact is, China competes too much with the barbarians! Pan-se-Chen carries on all these works from pure love of the arts and sciences. He devotes large sums of money to such undertakings, and generously distributes the products yielded and the different matters wrought under his auspices among the grandees of the empire and the learned among his own friends. Nevertheless, he can have an eye to business upon occasion. The mandarin of the red button—great dignitary as he is—is, like M. Jourdain, the son of a humble mer-

chant, and does not disdain the ancestral vocation. In the Celestial Empire, no one loses caste by money-making.

After going over the workshops, we passed into the court of the women's quarter, and Pan-se-Chen showed us over his study and his office. If it had not been for the strangely-shaped furniture, the odd arrangement of all the objects, the foreign character of the paintings, and the whimsical disposition of the books, we might have fancied ourselves suddenly transported into the rooms of a bibliomaniac or antiquarian of our own country. It may be said that the points of difference I have mentioned lie so open to notice that comparison is out of the question; but it is of *man*, who is the same everywhere, and not of the circumstantials, that I speak. The man himself was as greedy of rare smoke-dried editions and Chinese Elzevirs as the greediest specimen of the class could be, in his own way, among ourselves. The windows of the cabinet of Pán-se-Chen open upon the pretty court which I have described. The graceful bows of the weeping willows find their way almost into the very asylum of learning, and the birds who nest in the gray foliage are not afraid to peck at the furniture and the dusty bookshelves.

A table of some very dark wood is set in the middle of the apartment, and upon it are ranged the implements necessary for the labours of the in-

telligent proprietor: the bamboo pencil of marten's hair, the writing paper, and the inkstand cut out of agate in the shape of a lotus-leaf, upon which rests a stick of Indian ink, gilt in strange characters. Paper-clips of marble and precious stone, representing gods, animals, or fantastic flowers, serve to keep together pencil sketches and scattered notes. Pan-se-Chen told us that there was not one of these beautifully done articles which was of a less antiquity than a hundred years. The capacious easy chair of the studious man is made of a black, shining wood, and no soft cushion covers the elegantly-shaped seat. This cabinet is oblong in form; on one side are the bookshelves; on the other, the walls are covered with magnificent drawings and gigantic hieroglyphics.

We did not find in this sanctuary of Chinese art any of those vulgar paintings which we pointed out in the dwellings of the tradespeople; here, they were executed in silk, and were of a very remote antiquity. We now admired, for the first time, those grand embroidered tableaux which are with us a modern invention, but which have been wrought in China for many centuries. One of the hieroglyphic characters startled us by its gigantic proportions, and Pan-se-Chen told me it was an autograph of the viceroy Ki-in, and meant "Long life"—the expression of a wish of affection from friend to friend.

The library itself is certainly one of the most interesting objects in the learned man's boudoir. The wood of which it is constructed is, like that of the furniture, black, shining, and carven, and the books lie flat upon the shelves. The compartments are arranged according to the size and number of the volumes. A work in quarto is in juxtaposition with some diamond edition ; an author with a load of sixteen volumes shoulders a comrade who carries only six. The workmen, taking advantage of these irregularities, carve upon the edges of the shelves ornamental excrescences like branches of coral ; and these interlacing decorations appear to be executed quite at the fancy of the artist, and independent of all reference to appropriateness. The books are chiefly sewn ; those which are ostensibly bound are held together by two pieces of cardboard, or, oftener still, by two pieces of wood ; and this covering is fastened by an ivory clasp with a little sheath of silk.

It would be impossible for me to enumerate the multitudinous manuscripts, the ancient writings and paintings, ant-eaten and rat-eaten, which Pan-se-Chen called upon us to admire ; only those who have themselves experienced the archæologic fever of our enthusiastic collectors of ancient rarities can conceive them. I took advantage of a discussion started between our mandarin and Callery, about an historian, dead some few thousands of ages before our

year one, to go and ferret about in the recesses and corners of the room. My curiosity was rewarded. I discovered in a bye-nook, almost concealed by a frame of European manufacture, a portrait of high ethnological interest. It was evidently that of a man of Asiatic origin; the square forehead was furrowed with wrinkles; the ears, like a bat's wings, looked as if nature had intended them for fly-flappers rather than to finish off the organ of hearing; the eyes, crushed up between the summits of the cheek-bones and the orbital arch, seemed as if they were going to take a turn round the temples; the nose was flat and large; the mouth, which was enormous, was yet half hidden by some gray and black hairs; and the white beard tapered away to the shape of a camel-hair pencil below the pointed chin. The head was bald and shaven, and a yellow cloak fell in wide folds over the shoulders of this worthy, who held in his hand the *joueï*, which is the symbol of authority. After an attentive study of this painting, I said to my friends:—

“Pan-se-Ohen pretended, the other day, that nature could never come up to the sublime conceptions of the artist in the matter of female beauty; and I fancy she would find herself equally distanced in her efforts to realise the types of masculine ugliness invented by the Raphaels of the Flowery Land. Do look at this horrid old baboon!”

Rondot and Callery drew near ; but the latter, like a skilful connoisseur, observed :—

“ You are mistaken—this portrait is very handsome ! Such is our conception of true manly beauty. Pray notice those ears, how they taper off like a flattened cockade on a cap ; it is only elephants and Turkish dogs that have such ears ! Consider the eyes ! Where are they ? You can hardly see them—they are so recessed in their fortress of bone. This forehead, too, how majestically bald ! It is like a flight of stairs to a temple of the gods ! ”

“ Who is this individual ? ” said I to Pan-se-Chen, pointing with my fingers and eyes.

“ It is Tao-Konan,” (the Emperor) said he, in an awe-struck whisper.

“ He’s very ugly,” I observed.

The mandarin took the disgust expressed upon my countenance at this imperial deformity for burning admiration, and said to Callery :—

“ Ah ! the Doctor is amazed to see a portrait so perfectly beautiful. . . . It is the effect produced on all who behold it ! ”

“ And that,” said I, “ is really like him, is it ? ”

“ A fac-simile, within two-tenths,” replied the mandarin.

“ What ! ” I exclaimed, “ do you mean to say we have only eight-tenths of his ugliness there ? The man is a monster ! ”

Pan-se-Chen still obstinately misunderstood me, and observed, "You will, sooner or later, I perceive, coincide with me in my opinion of the beautiful. God creates, but man brings to perfection. Nature made our Emperor as handsome as she could, but art has made him handsomer ; and his nose, his ears, and his forehead are not so fine in the copy as in the original."

"Very good," said I to Callery ; "you must get permission to have this portrait copied, and we will make it known all over France."

Callery having explained our wish, Pan-se-Chen acceded, under the express condition that we should have the painting copied without disclosing who it was that gave us the permission. This reservation on the part of Pan-se-Chen surprised us, as he was usually so free in all his communications with us. Callery inquired the reason, and the mandarin replied :—

"It is forbidden to possess a portrait of the Emperor. This one was made clandestinely during a religious ceremony, and I doubt if you will find any painter who will dare to copy it for you."

Pan-se-Chen was right. When Rondot proposed the reproduction of this sacred effigy to several artists of Tsin-Youèn and Toung-Wan, he found their scruples invincible. "It is not worth while," said they all, "to run the risk of twenty blows with the bam-

boo for the sake of a few piastres." At last, however, a painter, bolder than the rest, agreed to make us the three copies required, upon condition that he might come to work in the French *hong*, in a double-locked room ; and every time we went to have a look at him, this sequestered man of the brush said to us, with a lugubrious face, in Anglo-Chino-Portuguese :—

"How can you thus expose yourselves to the danger of being scourged in the market-place? Shall you get much for these pictures in France that you run this risk so lightly?"

At last, however, we got our copies, and the portrait is one of those which Rondot has given to the world in one of our collections of engravings. But does not the embargo placed by the Emperors of China upon the circulation of their likenesses prove that they are quite aware how ugly they are?

Pan-se-Chen was quite up in the stirrups at having to do with such connoisseurs as we were; his pride in the situation was so excessive that he determined to show us all his treasures in a single day. So we crossed the garden, and went up to his bedroom. This is, at Canton, what the celebrated room of M. Sauvageot is at Paris—an apartment I have not had an opportunity of admiring. To have the *entrée* of this sanctuary is a positive initiation ; it is penetrating into a new China, or rather into ancient

China, ruled by the extinct dynasties of Soung and Han. Not a thing, not a chair, of a pattern younger than several ages. Looking at that limping foot-stool, well-worn in the service of former generations, one begins to understand better the principle upon which the learned Chinaman goes about to stock his feminine dove-cot ; it is no wonder that a man, who chooses the furniture that he uses daily on the principle of "the oftener handled by others, the better I like it," should resort to the flower-boats for his *tsié* ! In other respects, this bed-chamber presented a *tout-ensemble* which was harmonious enough ; the old-fashioned bed, the old-fashioned easy-chairs, the old-fashioned tables, were covered with equally old-fashioned ornaments and curiosities, costly and pretty, and covered with a dust that smacked of the erudite and the venerable.

Pan-se-Chen impressed upon us, surrounded by this chaos, that he never allowed anybody to touch anything, giving as his reason that he never knew where to find things after they had been meddled with. In this sacred horror of the intervention of an untaught hand in the arrangement of his precious curiosities, what Gallic antiquarian will not recognise our dear mandarin for a man and a brother ! I shall say no more of furniture in general, than that fashion is not more stationary in these matters in China than it is elsewhere ; fresh forms and kinds of ornament are always coming into use.

The antiquarian treasures amassed in the chamber of Pan-se-Chen consisted chiefly of ancient porcelains, of bronzes, of carven bamboos, of rare jewels, and mounted stones. All these objects, large and small, were supported upon brackets wrought with indescribable elegance and beauty. They represented, according to the character of the object they were destined to bear, knotted and twisted roots, flexile and blossoming boughs, a piece of rock, or the base of a column—the support contributing to unity of effect with the article supported, whether of bronze, stone, or what not. In China there is no object too small to have allotted to it some sort of pedestal, and very frequently the latter is of more intrinsic and artistic value than the thing it sustains. I am very much surprised that our French artists have not imitated, for our ornamental clocks, Sèvres vases, and charming statuettes, these admirable little pedestals or brackets, which are really among the happiest inventions of Chinese artistry.

The porcelains of Pan-se-Chen bore little resemblance to those with which we have been inundated for some years past; they were, for the most part, white vases, upon which were displayed green bamboo branches and lovely flowers, clouds flying before the wind, and old-fashioned individuals running before the same. Some of these works of art were executed in relief, in the manner of those wondrous inventions

of Bernard de Palissy. Among such specimens, we were particularly pleased with one upon a large jar—a flight of cranes sailing with spread wings over a forest of leafless trees. This scene of aerial pilgrimage forcibly recalled to us the departure of migrating birds at the approach of our winter.

If we had not seen the carven bamboos of Pan-se-Chen, we could never have supposed it possible for this monocotyledonous plant to acquire a development resembling that of our firs and poplars. Our friend the mandarin had in his collection a joint of this gigantic reed, the circumference of which was as great as that of a common-sized pail; and upon this natural cylindric vase were sculptured human beings, trees, flowers, fruits, and rocks; while every separate object was so cleanly projected, that the people might walk at your bidding, and the trees wave to the breath of the wind. Callery is now the possessor of this valuable curiosity.

I have already indicated the strange tastes of the Chinese, their love of the grotesque and the abnormal. This tendency of their minds is manifested very strikingly in their choice of certain stones of whimsical shapes. Their collections of choice pebbles • have nothing in common with our mineralogical and geological museums. Here, bits of rock are sought after for the accidental quality of having assumed the form of some fantastic animal, a time-hollowed

ravine, or a beetling cliff. I have called these *mounted stones* for lack of a better name, and because they are generally distinguished by a magnificent sculptured pedestal. Pan-se-Chen had a series of these bits of rock, of very curious configuration. If he was asked what he found to admire in them, what made them valuable, he used to reply,—“ Their shape first ; and secondly, their antiquity.” However, when Callery explained to him that in Europe we made collections of a similar character, with the view of studying the uses of the objects and determining their respective ages and the epochs in the earth’s history to which they belonged, the mandarin was astounded. He would have gone into ecstasies if we could have handed him the register of birth of every stone in his museum.

Every one has heard something of the famous Chinese mirrors—those magic mirrors which have exercised so much the sagacity of men of science. They are metallic disks, exquisitely polished, and reflecting objects with entire distinctness. Those of Pan-se-Chen were borne up by pedestals in the form of a crescent, whose limbs supported the reflector. Generally, Chinese mirrors have drawings or hieroglyphics graven on the side which is not polished ; and the curious part of the story is, that when the sun’s rays fall on the polished side, the reflected light, thrown upon the wall or the ceiling, projects the figures drawn upon the graven side ! This phe-

nomenon seemed for a long time utterly inexplicable. Here, according to Pan-se-Chen, is the keyword of this feat of metallurgic sorcery :—

“The artist,” said he, “cuts deeply with the graver into the smooth surface the same images which are executed in relief behind, and then fills up the hollows with an alloy of a density about equal to that of the metal used for the mirror itself, and polishes the whole. After this process it is impossible to detect, look as closely as you will, the spaces which have been cut away, and restored with alloy ; but I do not know how it is that the image is reflected when the disk is exposed to the sun.”

In France, a schoolboy in physical science could have told the *savant*, the man of letters, the great dignitary of the Flowery Land, that it is because the mirror and the alloy which has been employed to fill in the drawings in *bas-relief*, do not reflect the light in the same manner. The mirrors which possess this singular property are very rare in China, and very expensive. I do not know if the explanation which was given by our friend, is sanctioned by the Institute, but, while awaiting the orthodox decision of that learned body, I content myself with the above solution—because it is Chinese.

Numismatics are not neglected by the lettered sons of the Flowery Land, any more than the other sciences ; but they cultivate this branch after their own fashion, and keep to their own coins. The

moneys coined in China, as all the world knows, are small round coins, made of copper and zinc, with a square hole in the middle. This copper medium, called *sapees* by Europeans, and *tsien* by the Celestials, has only a nominal value, each coin being worth about a half-centime. They are cast, and not struck. In former times, the *tsien* were not always of the same shape. Certain dynasties took strange fancies, and issued money in the shape of knives, clocks, tortoises! One very curious fact is, that the moulds of the ancient moneys were really much better graven than those of modern times, and especially of the *most* modern; this, too, although coiners of base money have multiplied, and the right policy of the Government would have been to make imitation more difficult by increasing the excellence of the mint manufacture. Of all the coins shown us by Pan-se-Chen, the most original was one bearing the device—"Money may circulate, but it all comes back to the Emperor at last!" Some outspoken Emperor had caused this inscription to be graven upon the *tsien*. This facetious sovereign had fallen upon the well-known sentiment of some Béranger or other:—

"*Pauvres moutons, ah! vous avez beau faire;*"

but the reader probably knows the second line of this not too consolatory couplet.*

* Few English readers, "probably," have that felicity; but it must be some strongly-worded, popular version of the *Sic vos non vobis*, we suppose.—T.

Thus, then, in the midst of this Chinese civilisation, full as it seems to be of absurdity, we see how sensualists, men of taste, and men of learning, all find scope for the employment of their wealth. The Chinese are, like ourselves, quite capable of appreciating the refinements of learning and the pleasures of the intellect ; only—and in their eyes this is a merit—they measure both by their own standards. One of the real curses of wealth in China lies in a feature of their domestic organisation. There is not a petty merchant or insignificant mandarin around whom does not crawl a swarm of lazy servants—parasitic maggots, and nothing better. The humblest official cannot step across the street without being escorted by a legion of flunkies—chair-bearers, flag-bearers, kettle-drummers, footmen, *valets-de-chambre*, and other valetry *ad libitum*. And when the master pays a visit to a friend, or to his official superior, every one of these gentry is received in his train, so that welcoming a visitor is like opening the gates to an invading army. I was one day at Pan-se-Chen's when ten of the highest functionaries of the viceroyalty paid him a visit. In an instant the beautiful mansion of Che-pa-Pou was in the military occupation of a regiment of beggars, more or less ragged. Some strutted about under the arcades of the inner courts ; others coolly installed themselves in retired corners, and took their ease ; while a still greater

number, making themselves at home in the reception-room, assisted at the conference, as if it were a public show. The democratic side of Chinese manners is shown in nothing so much as in this life-in-common of master and servants. And, strange to say, the familiarity does not appear to diminish at all the veneration of the inferior for his superior. What is more, this incessant contact keeps up in the mind of the subordinate a feeling of respectful dread, which manifests itself every moment. This vigorous observance of the laws of their social hierarchy, results from those rules of exacting courtesy which may be said to govern China. Certain habits of deference and respect are never deviated from, whether by equals, among equals, or by subordinates, in the company of their superiors. Pan-se-Chen received his visitors in a hall upon the ground floor; a semicircle of those massive easy chairs I have described being ranged around the door. The noisy gong announced the arrivals, and very likely their titles and dignities, for, at the sound of that instrument, our mandarin rose from his seat, and, according to the rank of the new-comer, either went out to meet him or awaited him on the threshold. The moment the visitor set foot inside, the whole company rose, and remained standing until the host had conducted his guest to a seat. The same etiquette was observed when any one took leave. Pan-se-Chen

thought it sufficient to salute an officer of lower rank by crossing his hands and bowing ; but to the Viceroy and the Tartar General he exhausted the whole formulary of Chinese etiquette. He met them upon the outer threshold, and bowed low ; he raised his joined hands over his head, and bowed again twice, and lower than before ; then, having covered his left hand with the lappet of his coat, he presented it to the exalted individual, and conducted him to the sofa placed in front of the door in the centre of the semicircle. When he had reached the sofa, Pan-se-Chen made another bow to his visitor—and also to his visitor's seat!—and made a feint of wiping the dust off the hard, shining wood, with his sleeve ; after which he retired to his own chair, with a final reverence to his guest, who was now comfortably settled. Such was the ceremonial I witnessed, and at that moment I thought these Chinese really resembled the conventional Chinamen of chintzes and screens.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MANDARIN'S WIFE AND HER SATELLITES—THE
CHILDREN—MYSTERIES OF A CHINESE LADY'S TOILET
—FEMALE DEMORALISATION—THE MANDARIN'S
MOTHER—COURTEZANS AND CONCUBINES.

MADAME LI, the legitimate wife of Pan-se-Chen, daughter of a powerful minister at the Court of Peking, was one of the most aristocratic beauties of the Flowery Land. This frail and delicate little creature resembled a sprig of jessamine swayed by the wind; her loveable and tenderly chiselled features wore an expression in which smiling and sadness were blended; one might have fancied her thoughts were rosy white as the hue which art had lent to her cheeks. Her eyes, like two black pearls, sent from behind the shelter of her silken lashes soft languorous glances, or sparkling rays of innocent womanly malice. Notwithstanding a little want of grace in its curve, her nose would not have disfigured an European countenance. Madame Li was ladylike after the manner of a charming young girl; her dignity was infantine in its grace. And as on one of the great sofas of black wood she sat see-sawing her legs backwards and forwards, showing her feet encased in slippers brodered with gold, and her ankles hung with bracelets, picking

the leaves off an *eyulan* flower with her pretty little fingers, murmuring musically rather than talking—you could hardly help feeling as if you could eat her up like an orange-flower. It was impossible to confound Madame Li with her twelve satellites when she was in the midst of them. It was not that she had in perfection that air of imposing simplicity which bespeaks a woman of gentle blood, or that she was more elegantly dressed ; but that she had the habit of command—a certain conscious superiority of carriage, sometimes breaking out into caprice, perhaps sometimes into anger, but which made you exclaim, “ This is the mistress here.” Madame Li wore mourning weeds all the time she was under my notice, and as therefore very simply attired : she appeared in a cham of a very clear shade of blue, and had an ornament in the shape of a comb in her long, black, low-falling tresses ; but had she been got up like a picture on rice paper, she could not have been more charming.

The twelve *tsié* represented all ages, all heights, and all degrees of plumpness ; they were there, apparently, to testify to the capricious longings of Pan-se-Chen, and to give us the approximate date of the first year of his amours ! A date, alas ! which was written only too plainly on more than one of these faces ; though it should be added that a certain air of real distinction effaced from these charming countenances the furrows which time had wrought. You might have fancied, even, from the subdued,

reticent manners of those who aspired simply to the title of *friend*, that our mandarin had not chosen them himself, but that the affectionate hand of a mother or a sister had guided his then inexperienced adolescent taste. We had pointed out to us the two girls from the flower-boats, of whom our friend had spoken to us : they were among the youngest there. These were two spirited and frolicsome little beings, less, much less pretty than Madame Li, and less distinguished in their manners than their companions. They served, among those soberer beauties, the purpose of condiments at a well-furnished feast ; they had a way of swinging their arms, of walking, of arranging their head-dress, of wearing their clothes, which made them very attractive women, and very different from their friends. Another trait of resemblance between Chinese civilisation and our own ! Have not we, also, women amongst us of restless, rather stormy habits, whose carriage and demeanour have a spice of recklessness, which women of the world sometimes imitate, when perhaps they wish to convey the impression that they are out of their places ?

When we penetrated into the interior apartments, the whole swarm of women buzzed about us, measured us off with keen, inquisitive eyes, not without little short, ringing, satirical laughs, and overwhelmed Callery with questions. One day when we entered into the court of the women's quarter, we heard a

soft, plaintive voice singing. I lifted up my eyes to the façade, painted and varnished like a lacquered box, and beheld through the window of trellised bamboo-work the pretty little head of Madame Li, above which swung the boughs of a weeping willow. The charming creature made us a good-natured bow, and kept her place at the window, singing away like a caged nightingale.

We entered into the aviary of our friend Pan-se-Chen. On this occasion it seemed to us that the pretty birds led a pleasanter life than usual. These women led a very easy life in this wealthy home. During the day they congregated in little groups, and did their work or gossiped. Their occupations had nothing laborious about them : they did embroidery, played a little music, or perhaps kneaded rice-flour, and made sweetmeats for confectionery luncheons. Our presence in this part of the house caused as much flutter in that usually calm retreat as the visit of a bishop to a hamlet. The whole bevy of fascinating little beings made an irruption into the hall where we were received, and prattled away like a flock of nuns. A table, covered with sweetmeats, preserves, and tarts, was set in the middle of the room, and first one and then the other came nibbling and pecking as she pleased, with the tips of her chopsticks. Young domestics, with hair hanging down their backs, brought us tea on trays of red lacquer ;

and the nurses of the children, babies in hand, came in and went out, studying us with curious glances. It is impossible to describe the affecting solicitude of which the dear little ones were the incessant objects. Looking at all these women, eagerly crowding around them and smothering them with fond caresses, it was out of the question to guess which were the mothers of particular children. We had many opportunities of observing that the affectionate cares lavished upon these little Chinese are really intelligent and well-directed : if the temperature sank upon a sudden ever so little, the tender creatures were sure to be wrapped up gingerly in long robes of silken cloth, lined with that fine cotton which resembles down.

Pan-se-Chen will leave a numerous seed behind him, if Heaven spares his life ; he had at this period four babies in swaddling-bands all at once ! All four were dressed with exaggerated splendour : they wore gold-broidered hoods, and had several ornamental playthings about them—in fact, all those trappings with which children used to be harnessed in France fifty years ago. Madame Li had not had the good fortune to be a mother ; yet, notwithstanding Chinese ideas upon this subject, she did not seem to fret because that happy privilege had been denied to her. It is true that she was handsomely indemnified for the privation by the fecundity of her com-

panions, for they made her a mother several times in the course of every year. I use the word "mother" advisedly in this place. By the Chinese law, the regular wife is the sole legal mother of a man's offspring, and she alone is called mother by the children. Reckoning thus, Madame Li was mother to sons not ten years younger than herself. This is the Celestial travesty of the celebrated maxim of Roman jurisprudence—*Ea mater est quam nuptiæ demonstrant*.

In marrying Madame Li, Pan-se-Chen had followed the famous Chinese proverb which says, "In a union, the doors must correspond ;" which we have, in our own style, rendered in the song—

" Il faut des époux assortis,
Dans les liens du mariage."

Here the husband and the wife were of the same station in society, of corresponding birth and education. The young mistress exercised an absolute sway in her domestic realms—tolerating the tsié, but upon condition that they acknowledged their subordination, and minded her. One day Callery spoke to Madame Li of some little ornamental *chefs-d'œuvre* in needlework executed by French ladies. The great lady of the Celestial Empire seemed desirous to prove to us that she, too, was not idle, and knew how, with her fairy fingers, to produce pretty little wonders of the same order ; so she ordered one of the satellites to go and fetch her a piece of unfinished work from a neighbouring apartment. The poor little club-footed

messenger was a long time in executing her errand, and Madame Li now and then manifested signs of impatience. When the concubine made her appearance at last, bringing the desired article, the legitimate wife rose from her seat, went up to her, snatched the work away, and with her own slender hands gave her two smart boxes on the ear, which shook from her cheeks a powder of white and pink mingled. The unlucky tsié, a charming young person, the one who most nearly resembled the mistress of the house, fled into a corner, crying and sobbing, and not a soul, in all this feminine assembly, dared to speak a word of protest against the punishment.

We had other proofs of the despotic authority exercised by this young lady under her own roof. In her presence, the tsié were respectful and almost timid; they trembled to take any liberty without formal leave given; and the mistress must pass the word for free speech and innocent mirth before they dared to laugh and joke. When Madame de Lagrené went to visit the house of Pan-se-Chen, it was Madame Li who received her. She always went through her duties as hostess and mistress of the household with ease and dignity. After the customary compliments and salutations, she offered her hand—covered with her long clothes—to the great lady of the West, and made her sit at her side by a table tastefully served. The tsié, at a distance behind these ladies, elegantly dressed, with their heads

profusely decked with flowers, and trembling on their small feet like a tumbler standing tiptoe as Mercury, looked like *figurantes* at the opera. By-and-bye, as soon as the young Chinese had become a little familiarised with Madame the Ambassador's wife, her childlike simplicity resumed its influence, and she examined, item by item, all the particulars of the Parisian toilette. Every object provoked a murmur of admiration : a pretty bracelet, a masterpiece of jewellery, quite captivated her, and in her gestures and the tones of her voice she so broadly betrayed her wish to have it, that Madame de Lagrené took it off and fastened it on the arm of the fair Chinese, who took care not to refuse the gift, and expressed her delight at possessing the desired object by warbling a charming little song, full of caressing turns, tender and effortless, characteristic in fact of this spoilt child. The first moments of pleasure over, she grew calm, and said to the Ambassador's lady :—

“ Since you give me your most precious jewels, you love me, I know ; tell me, then, what I must do to have, like you, a complexion white as the jessamine and ruddy as the peach ? ”

At this question, Callery, who alone understood the young lady, replied with a smile :—

“ It is a privilege of the women of the West to have cheeks coloured thus ; they use no artificial means to produce it.”

Madame Li was quite incredulous. She called for a soft towel, and having moistened it, took the hand of Madame de Lagrené and rubbed it vigorously. When she found that there was not a grain of either white or red powder on the skin, she held up the hand to her companions, exclaiming, in accents of astonishment :—

“It is true ! it is true ! the women of Europe have naturally a skin delicately coloured like the flowers in our gardens !”

To dress so as to please is the leading idea of the life of a Chinese woman ; perhaps, indeed, of the women of all countries. Madame Li, grateful for the present of the bracelet, volunteered to instruct Madame de Lagrené in some of the secrets of the art of beauty practised at the toilettes of Chinese ladies.

“You have,” said she, “a sweet mouth, small and red as that of an infant newly-born ; but it would be smaller still if you would adopt the method we employ.”

“What is that ?” inquired the Ambassador’s lady.

“I will show you !”

They brought to the young Chinese a saucer containing a pink paste ; she took some up on the tip of her little finger, and very neatly made in the middle of the lower lip of Madame de Lagrené an artificial

dimple, which fixed the eye of the observer, and diminished the apparent size of the mouth. This device ought to find favour at the hands of the artists of our fashion-books, whose model women have mouths much smaller than their eyes.

While conversing with Pan-se-Chen about his house and his *ménage*, I begged Callery to ask him how it happened that, having so lovely and every way worthy a partner as Madame Li, he allowed himself the luxury of these tsié ?

"What would you have me do ?" answered the great mandarin ; "I had them before I got married, and I cannot send them away now."

"Very good," I rejoined ; "but it appears to me that you have bought some since."

"Undoubtedly ! To be sure ! It is a matter of luxury, of course ; one cannot help certain superfluities in the way of expenditure. I am told that in your country rich men buy horses !"

"Yes ; but after having bought them they do not for that reason keep them for ever in their stables ; when their humour is satisfied they sell them, or exchange them"

"That is wise," said Pan-se-Chen, shaking his head sagely ; "but a woman is not like a horse. She is tenderer ; she does not kick, and she seldom bites ; but she can speak ; and it is not so easy to get rid of her, when she asks you to keep her, as it is to dispose of a horse !"

Pan-se-Chen, in the course of these communications, informed us of many things relating to the mysteries of the women's quarter. A thorough demoralisation is the rule there. The semi-sequestration of which women are the subjects is not a guarantee against all conjugal accidents. And the mandarin told us, with a groan, that a multiplicity of wives involved the certainty that the husband would be deceived frequently, and with impunity; these ladies draw up the ladder of their own love secrets after them! He confessed quite frankly that there was not one of his wives whom he trusted; and, as a last characteristic trait of the demoralisation which infects this unfortunate country, he related to us several stories of real life, in order to prove that disorder and vice find their way into Chinese homes by means of the relatives of the tsié, the servants, and, above all, by the children!

"They marry young, very young," added he, "and very speedily a man has children, who become his rivals with the tsié of his own establishment!"

"Well, then, the remedy is at hand," said Cal-lery; "follow the rules of sound, orthodox morality, and do not have any tsié unless you are without male issue, as the sages lay it down."

"Good! You are right!" cried Pan-se-Chen; "but there are inveterate evils which one really cannot remedy."

The conversation had now taken such a turn that we resolved to seize the opportunity of sounding our mandarin thoroughly ; we endeavoured to ascertain the strength of his affection for his wives.

"Polygamy," resumed Callery, "must lead to many embarrassments, vexations, and troubles. Women are not exempt from sickness any more than other created beings, and when they die it is a source of sorrow and mental suffering."

"When they die," replied Pan-se-Chen, "we buy them a coffin : that is expensive, but it is a cheap suit, after all, for one has not to renew it by-and-bye."

This utterly heartless answer did not startle me in the least. I had already been enabled to understand the feelings with which the Chinese regard their women. When at Macao, I went one day to call upon my friend Dr. Pitter, and found in the vestibule of his house one of his porters, weeping silently in a corner, almost concealed from observation, whilst his companion appeared to be chiding him for his grief. Now, a Chinese weeping with common decency, like a man in real affliction of soul, is a phenomenon. The children of the Flowery Land laugh and smile incessantly ; but when they weep, they launch out into obstreperous howlings. I called the attention of Pitter to what I had observed. My friend said :—"I will go and see what

is the explanation of this reversal of natural laws in China."

He called the two men, who ran up directly.

"What are you weeping for?" he asked of the lachrymose individual.

The person questioned did not breathe a syllable. His companion, however, spoke for him :—

"Don't mind him, Nhon : the silly fellow is crying because his wife died this morning."

"Poor man ! it is natural enough for him to cry," said Pitter. "And you are scolding him for it, I suppose?"

"Come, Nhon, you are as unreasonable as he is ! Do you weep when you tear up an old coat ? Do you weep when you lose something that has been useful to you for a long time ? Then why weep for a wife ? She is just like a best suit in your wardrobe. It is not worth while to fret about losing her ; it is easy to go and buy another !"

Yet these Chinese, who have no natural affection for their wives and their *tsié*, are tender and respectful towards their mothers, even to the length of positive idolatry. Pan-se-Chen, the millionaire, the voluptuary, the *savant*, the man of intellect, never held himself released from those duties to his mother, which are so sacredly enjoined. As soon as he reached home, his first care was to salute her, his next, to inquire if anything had vexed her in his absence— if everybody in the house, great and small, had been

respectful, attentive, and obedient. Yet, the old lady was the legitimate wife of the old Poun-tin-Quoua ; she was only the *legal* mother of our mandarin, who was, in truth, the son of a concubine.

This circumstance prepares the way for a very singular fact—it is, that the mourning for a natural mother is not worn, *probably*, in the same manner as for a legal mother. In China a white robe is the sign of grief ; the individual supposed to be wounded in his affections wears no loud colours ; he abstains from all kind of ornament, and disuses for the time even the insignia of his office, if he be a public man. Now, while we were at Canton, Pan-se-Chen happened to lose his *real* mother ; his visiting cards indicated the nature of his affliction ; yet nevertheless he went about dressed like other people, and nothing in his external appearance denoted any internal sorrow, except that he sometimes put on his long cham of deep blue trimmed with glass buttons, which he had informed us was a mourning garment.

Our friend introduced us to Madame Poun-tin-Quoua. The old lady had reached a time of life at which her sex cease to employ any artificial means to dissimulate their age, so we saw her as she really was. Her white hair was not plaited, it was simply gathered above the forehead in the style of women in humble life, and supported by long pins. Her dress was very simple : the robe, the trousers, and the cham, were of green edged with black velvet.

Upon her bosom, suspended by a button of the cham, she wore an oval case, prettily broidered, to hold her spectacles. Madame Poun-tin-Quoua had given up cosmetics, whether white or red. Her venerable wrinkles spread undisguised over her yellow face, which was slightly emaciated, but she was not in the least decrepid. Her manners were noble and distinguished, and she appeared much pleased with the tokens of respect which we paid to her. In this conjuncture we for once threw off our European stiffness, and imitated Pan-se-Chen in all his bowings and salutations.

Madame Poun-tin-Quoua said to us :—

“I used to see Europeans during my husband’s lifetime. I am glad to see them friendly with my son as they were with his father.”

We spent some hours with the old lady, who catechised us much more closely upon our impressions of China than upon the customs of Europe. When we took our leave of her, she wished us long life, and especially an early return to our country and the bosom of our families. In leaving Madame Poun-tin-Quoua, we said to Pan-se-Chen :—

“Here is one woman, whom you love and respect !”

“Certainly ; of course,” exclaimed the mandarin ; “she is my mother.”

“Well ; among the women of your house there are women who are also mothers !”

“Quite another thing, I assure you—that is my

children's business; they are taught to love and honour Madame Li. But, as for me, my mother is the object of all my affection, my reverence, and my tenderness. I undertake nothing without first consulting her, and, I must say, she has a sagacity which always astonishes me! A mother!" cried the mandarin, with an enthusiasm not at all usual with him; "a mother is gifted with faculties superior to those of all other beings!"

This respect, affection, almost worship, for mothers, is in flagrant opposition to that insensibility towards women in general, which is affected by the Chinese; but it is not only in the Flowery Empire that these inexplicable contradictions may be found.

The elder sons of Pan-se-Chen were in constant communication with the women of his establishment: one was a great boy of seventeen, with a not very intelligent physiognomy; and the other a little fellow of eight years old. This last had a frank, affectionate, winsome, playful address. When he saw the daughters of Madame de Lagrené, he took a fancy to them. In particular he testified a lively preference for Mademoiselle Olga; and when he discovered that she had not had her feet compressed like his sisters, and that she could leap and run, he displayed his satisfaction by clapping his hands and jumping about. Then he took the arm of his new acquaintance, and led her away to show her over every part of the fine house of Che-pa-Pou.

He showed her from the terrace the Tartar city and the Chinese city, of which the roofs can be dimly seen, and I am sure he thought his companions very absurd to shut the door rudely in the face of his charming friend. The two sons of Pan-se-Chen were brought up in the house : they had a professor of deportment, a small, pedantic person, whom the elder of the boys appeared to take for a model.

I have thus introduced to my reader nearly all the individuals composing the household of our mandarin. Now, if he will take into account the army of domestics required to wait upon this little world,—the number of palaquin-bearers necessary for carrying about such a multitude, of whom not one will go on foot through the streets,—the enormous consumption of food, of clothing, of articles of luxury, which goes on in such an establishment,—he will readily comprehend that the Chinese, even the richest, can be at no loss in spending their enormous fortunes.

Of late years, Chinese women have been seen in Europe ; and those who have had opportunities of examining them, will perhaps find my account of the beauty of their countrywomen very exaggerated. Let me, therefore, say a few explanatory words upon this topic. There is in China a vast difference between the women of the populace and the women of the upper classes ; the women of the first description are almost uniformly ugly—the

others are generally pretty. This is accounted for by a very simple fact. A Chinese woman is a work of art, and not a natural product! Infinite care, uninterrupted superintendence, and a special training, are necessary to make a Chinese beauty; and, as soon as the article has been painstakingly got up, it becomes the exclusive property of the wealthy. If it be a young girl of good station, she is sought in marriage by wealthy men; if of humbler rank, the same men buy her through the intervention of some matron, or perhaps after she has been submitted to the criticism of amateurs in a flower-boat or a flower-house.

In China there is nothing discreditable in the possession of a courtesan, or the position of a concubine. In a poor, but respectable home, parents will bring up their daughters for those positions, just as in France and England girls are educated for governesses, companions, or artists. This facility in disposing of the girls is the reason that the poorer population is, year by year, skimmed of its finest products in the fair sex; so that foreigners, who do not, in an ordinary way, penetrate into Chinese interiors or flower-houses, scarcely see the most favourable types of the race; and that the yellow-skinned traffickers who bring to Europe the girls of Kuang-ton, or Fo-kien, can only make recruits of unfortunates whose feet have been crushed in their infancy, and whose blighted beauty has deceived the hopes of their worthy parents. In a

word, in England and France, the only Chinese women beheld as yet have been—the rejected of the flower-boats of Canton !

For the rest, in order to comprehend the beauty of the Chinese women, it is necessary to comprehend the style of Chinese art ; to be able to look kindly upon their contorted architecture, their fantastic decorations, their dragons with notched and twisted tails, their impossible flowers, their childish tastes, and even their stumpy, etiolated, and moss-eaten trees. These conditions granted, you may find many charms in that strange product of human whim, that being in whom the vital forces have been sapped, whose physical development has been arrested, in order that she may never expand to the full, and may remain all her life a pitiable, suffering creature—a Chinese woman. You may really come at last to love these elegant and graceful creatures, with their helmet-like masses of black hair, whose slanting eyes wear an expression of goodness and sweetness unutterable ; who resemble, in their little caressing, wilful ways, artful, spoiled children. Everything in them will seem loveable, even their little feet, bound with rings of gold, and imprisoned in red bandages !

The sentiment of unity, of congruity, is profoundly active, and ever present in the human mind. Whatever man creates links itself with some other thing ; borrows completeness from its environment,

and bestows it in its turn. The law of association will always rule ; and a Chinese woman, to be seen as I have painted her, must be seen in the gilded prison which man has made for her. You must watch her tottering along, screen in hand, over those brilliant floors which reflect her features ; watch her seated in her porcelain chair, her little body swaying to and fro without cessation ; watch her eating with the mother-of-pearl chopsticks, which so well become her little fingers and her little mouth ! Removed from these native conditions, the Chinese woman is a caricature ; as the Turkish woman is a caricature, out of the harem.

Still, it does strike me that if Madame Li had visited France—and the idea was really just started for a moment—she would have been enthusiastically admired ; that sonnets, madrigals, and odes, would have fallen at her truncated feet in showers. I have a foundation for this opinion : a lady friend of mine, having seen Madame Li a year after I had seen her, replied to my inquiry, as to what she thought of her :—"I thought her the most graceful, the most charming, the very prettiest, creature I ever saw in my life !"

This, then, is not my impression—it is that of a woman of taste unquestionably without bias in favour of a woman of another race. But, alas ! Madame Li will never visit France. She died two years ago. Probably no memorial of her remains but that which I have intrusted to these faithful pages.

CHAPTER XII.

EDUCATION AND LITERATURE IN CANTON.

CANTON is not only a great focus of commerce, and a city of pleasure and luxury; it is also a literary and cultivated city. Hither come, every three years, the *siou-tsaï* of the viceroyalty of Kuang-ton and Kuang-si, to undergo, before a member of the College of the Han-Lin, delegated by the Emperor, an examination by which they may earn the degree of *kin-jèn*.

There is not a country in the world where there are such facilities of education for children of all ranks as China. In this empire, not a village, not a hamlet, however small, but has its day-school and evening-school. In the rural districts, the heads of the nearest houses join together to appoint a school-master, whom they instal in the most centrally-situated house of their quarter. All the schools are supported at the cost of the parents; the Government is innocent of any "organisation of instruction;" its interference comes somewhat later, and aims to test and verify, in some sort, the outcome of the instruction received.

A Chinese proverb says, that there are more doc-

tors than sick people, and more masters than scholars. This very exaggerated proposition has yet a degree of plausibility and truth in it. In China, literary degrees open the door to honours and to wealth. No success in life is possible, if the aspirant have not passed the ordeal of the public examinations. The merited privileges which here attend upon learning have the effect of enticing into a literary career great numbers of persons, for whom it is an unhappy one : there is not a family which does not make great sacrifices in order to count a graduate among its members. But in China, as elsewhere, there are "many called and few chosen!" The unlucky candidates are very numerous, and different orders of minds are compelled to seek, in different professions, the means of utilising the knowledge they have acquired. It is not only France which is encumbered with educated young men in search of a vocation. Teaching and medicine are the two pursuits most commonly resorted to by these university men. It sometimes happens, even, that the poor unsuccessful ones devote themselves to school-keeping when young, picking up as they can stray recipes for curing all diseases ; and then when their hair begins to turn gray, they suddenly appear in the character of physicians !

I shall not enter upon a discussion relative to the difficulties which the Chinese method of writing presents. We have in France plenty of learned men well able to deal with that subject, and I shall

not place my ignorance in competition with their knowledge. But certain assertions, with regard to the method of teaching adopted in China, are repeated with such obstinacy by incompetent persons, that it is not useless to correct them when opportunity offers. The Jesuit fathers have very well observed, that, in spite of the difficulty which exists in the study of Chinese, everybody knows how to read in the Celestial Empire, because the schoolmaster takes pains to teach every one what is necessary according to his condition. The fact is analogous to what takes place in France, and in all civilised countries, where the elementary teacher gives the young of the masses sufficient education for the management of their business, and the ordinary affairs of life, but not sufficient to make it easy for them to digress into scientific treatises or transcendental metaphysics. Well, some very dull persons have chosen to confound *condition in life* with *profession or trade*, and pretended that every one receives an education specially bearing upon the technical words of his business ! It was with amazement that I read in a recently published work the following passage :—

“ I remember well my astonishment, when, the first time I walked through the streets of Canton with my servant, I discovered that he could only read the notifications of the shoemakers, because he had only learned the trade of a shoemaker ! ” Many humorous individuals are always repeating ridicu-

lous stories about China and the Chinese ; but that pastime should, I fancy, be forbidden to serious travellers. It is extremely well observed by Sir John Davis, that "all the assertions put forth concerning the difficulties of the Chinese characters, from their number and variety, are the exaggerations of ignorance."

Writing being, in the eyes of a Chinaman, the highest expression of civilisation, it is the object of a sort of worship. Often masons, journeymen, demolishing a house, will pause over some portion of the wall covered with hieroglyphic characters, and go through certain religious ceremonies, before they obliterate them. In all respectable houses there is a little white portable stove, of an octagonal shape, on which is inscribed, in red letters, "Have pity on the written paper!" When a child or a servant finds a stray leaf or a torn book, it is brought to be burned with pious care upon this altar consecrated to the Ingenious Art. There may be something puerile in this superstition, to our judgments, but it is based upon creditable feelings ; it is the simple expression of the admiration of the Chinese for literary superiority.

Here the "album," that refuge of small celebrities, is not known, but the fan supplies its place. It is customary, in social intercourse with respectable people, to offer them a paper fan, whose folds are covered with sentences or verses. In this case the present itself must be of extreme simplicity, to

make it evident that the value consists entirely in the literary productions confided to its keeping. After the dinner which Huan-gan-Toun gave to M. de Ferrières, in the pagoda of the Nenufar at Macao, he presented to me the fan he had been using, which contained in its folds the counsels of a learned sage to a young man desirous of visiting China. On these frail and foliated sheets are inscribed the letter of an academician to his colleague, or the strophes, sonnets, and madrigals exchanged by two rival poets. M. de Ferrières has reproduced in his book the verses sent to him by Huan-gan-Toun, and I shall insert in this place those which the ugliest of the Han-lin, the descendant of Confucius, Chao-Chan-Lin, presented to our friend Callery. These verses are, at present, quite unedited; but they form a portion of the book which my friend proposes to publish shortly, and he has been so good, with that disinterestedness which characterises him, as to allow me to print them beforehand. These, then, are—

THE VERSES OF CHAO-CHAN-LIN.

“Macao, grouped like a flower not yet developed, resembles a pedicle tipped with a young bud.

“Its storeyed houses are like the stairs which lead up to the heavenly abodes.

“In this city there is a stranger come from the far, far West.

“His heart loveth China, and his spirit delighteth in the studies of our land!

“Having had the honour of following those to whom

was intrusted the administration of affairs, I have made the acquaintance of the man of letters from the West.

"I have taken him by the hand in friendship, and I have laughed with him.

"We have met in cheerful converse over the greenstone goblets and dishes ornamented with pearls. Lo, what a wonder is this! After more than a thousand years, China and the world without have made a compact of friendship which is mutual.

"The stranger of whom I sing embraces within the compass of his mind the most opposite sciences: he sounds their depths.

"Moreover, while his spirit is gifted with lofty wisdom, his outer form discovers his genius.

"His aspect recalls the beauty of the tiger and the majesty of the dragon.

"His writings have been long known and esteemed in Europe.

"Interrogate him at your will: he will tell you the theory of celestial and terrestrial motions; he will go to the root and fountain of all things, and will advance nothing without proofs.

"He is able admirably to penetrate the true meaning of our sacred books.

"When he enumerates the deeds of ancient times, it is as if necklaces of pearl fell from his mouth, and the pearls were scattered.

"He explains, O most wonderful thing! all the characters in our dictionaries.

"He handles the pencil like a son of the Flowery Land, and his doctrines do not differ from ours.

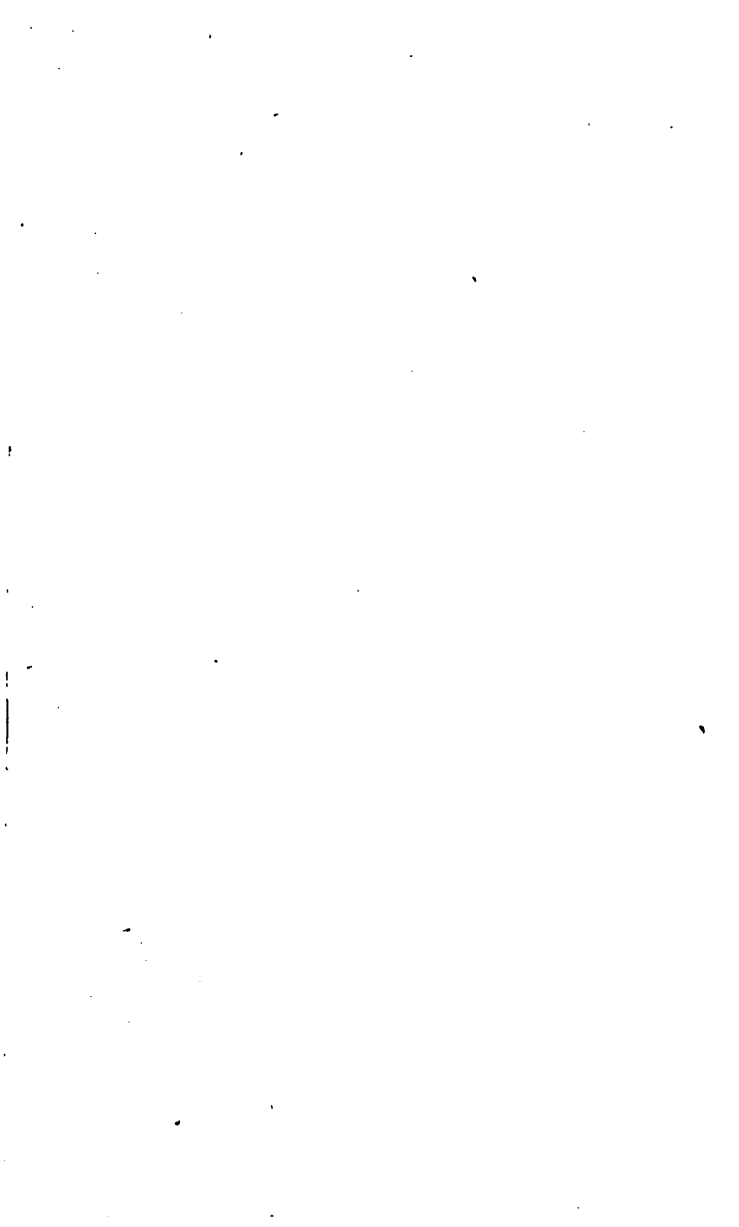
"Speak not of pieces of silk mutually offered! my greatest pleasure is to take the goblet of glass and give him to drink!

"These imperfect Verses are offered by Chao-Chan-Lin to M. Callery, in order that he may correct them."

Alas ! " these imperfect verses," as the poetical mandarin calls them, resemble all the verses hatched for ages in the Flowery Land—those of the master as well as those of the pupil : they all reproduce, without intermission, the same images and the same thoughts. Poets and prose-writers in China have only one idea—that of servilely copying the models which their classic orthodoxy holds out for their imitation as perfect. In their judgment, originality would be a fault. This literary system, weighing continually upon all education, has produced the most deplorable results. Under the guidance of the *sien-seng* minds lose their individuality; they become materialised, and resemble machines which always execute the same round of motions, and throw off uniformly the same results. Let us learn from this that the exaggeration of even the best of human feelings has its dangers ; too much respect for ancient forms begets monotony ; literary conservatism may be carried to excess.

I have endeavoured, in this brief sketch, to give the reader an idea of the capital of the two Kuangs, and to familiarise him with Canton in its different phases. This is a work not yet attempted in our country. I hope I have been successful, so far as the difficulties of the task permitted. I have not said anything in this attempt of the country houses of the mandarins, of Chinese festivals, of their *restaurants*, of their pagodas, or of their theatres ; but the omissions are intentional. For the last thirty

years, every traveller who has been to China has stopped short at Canton ; and knowing, myself, of a score of descriptions more or less exact of the same localities, the same structures, the same entertainments, I have not had the courage to execute fresh variations upon such exhausted themes. Canton is, after all, only one corner of China, and if this narrative should be favourably received by the public, I will supply my apparent oversight, by describing, hereafter, some quarters less known than the famous City, and for that very reason more interesting.



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